

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

An Among Us BNHA Zine



INTRODUCTION

In the middle of October 2020, at the peak of Among Us' popularity, I made a tweet one day asking if people would be interested in seeing a crossover zine between the game and the anime we all know and love, Boku No Hero Academia. It seemed like such an interesting mixture, with endless possibilities for different scenarios. You could have suspense, you could have team bonding, you could have betrayal, even comedy. All of the aspects of such a fun and entertaining game made all the more enticing by imagining our favourite BNHA characters in those roles instead.

People seemed genuinely excited by the idea! I'd never moderated for a zine, but I'd been a contributor before, and I had been in fandom spaces long enough to understand the gist of what to do. So I grabbed a couple of my Twitter friends, started brainstorming, and not long later Imposter Syndrome was born. We hit over 100 followers in little over 12 hours after making our announcement - interest check not even open yet - and I remember being so over the moon at how many other people were intrigued by the same neverending possibilities that this crossover could give us.

And here we are, nine months later, with the final product.

The talented contributors of Imposter Syndrome have brought you characters, settings and dynamics from all over the galaxy and have created some truly extraordinary fics and art. Their stories are thrilling and captivating, their artwork striking and evocative. I know a lot of care went into their pieces for this zine, and their hard work has definitely paid off. I'll let their beautiful pieces speak for themselves, but the contributors should all be very proud of themselves.

I do want to give an extra special thank you to the wonderful team of moderators who helped bring this project to life alongside me. This was my first experience as a head moderator, and all of you were invaluable at one point or another during the creation process. Whether it be with your wisdom, creativity, or just your support, you all were the backbone of Imposter Syndrome and I couldn't be more thankful to have worked with such incredible individuals. Brash, Sai, Kei, Caia, Nesty and Feonixe - it has been an absolute pleasure to bring this project to life with you all.

This zine has been created with so much care, love, and maybe just a little bit of murder sprinkled in here and there too. We hope you enjoy!

- Head Moderator, Lo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

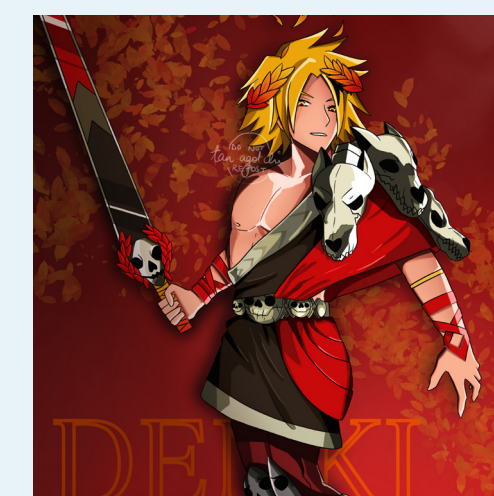


COMPLETIST

P.6

🐦 completist_

🔗 completist



TAN.AGOTCHI

P.13

🐦 tan_agotchi

📷 tan.agotchi

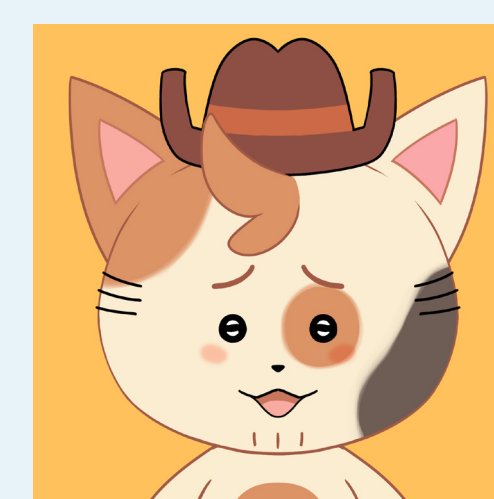


LABICHERAMURE

P.14

🐦 fight_me_nerds

🔗 labicheramure



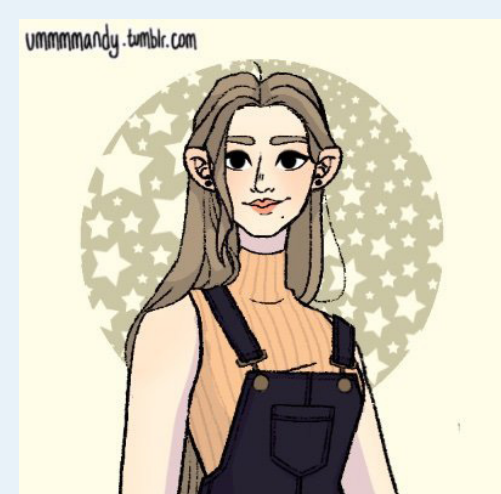
APRICALICO

P.21

🐦 Apricalico

🔗 apricalico

📺 apricalico

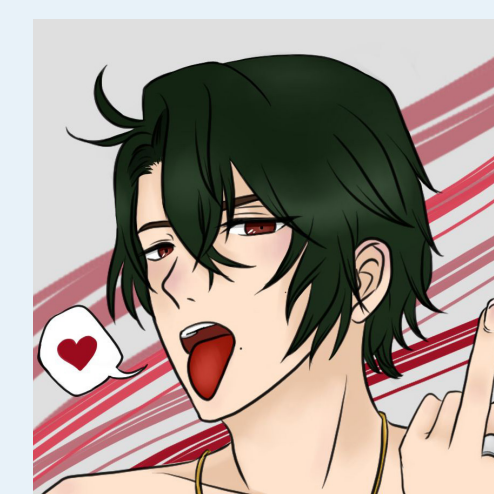


MAHOGANYDOODLES

P.22

🐦 mahoganydoodles 🔗 MahoganyDoodles

📺 mahoganydoodles



IZANA

P.29

🐦 kamiizana

📷 kamiizanaart

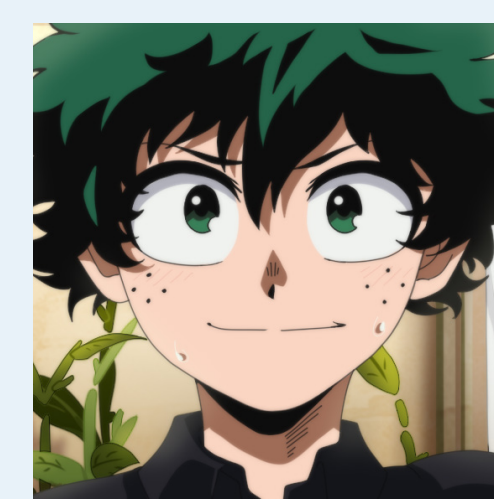


HIBA

P.30

🐦 hibakyochan

🔗 hibahime



RU-SHI

P.38

🐦 rukatakushima

📷 rukatakushima

📺 rukatakushima



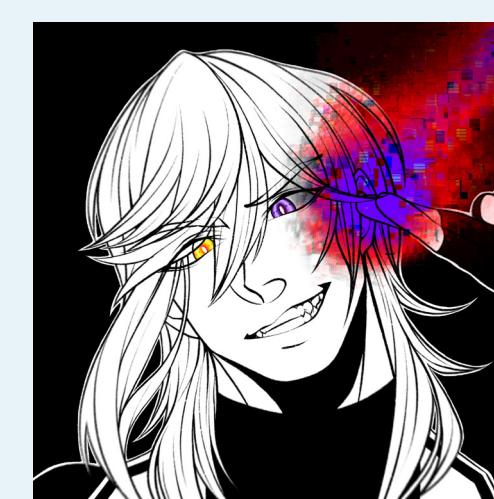
LEFTIESAREHOTTER

P.39

🐦 leftiesarehotter

🔗 LeftiesAreHotter

📺 leftiesarehotter



NOVARAII

P.47

🐦 novaraii_arts

📷 novaraii

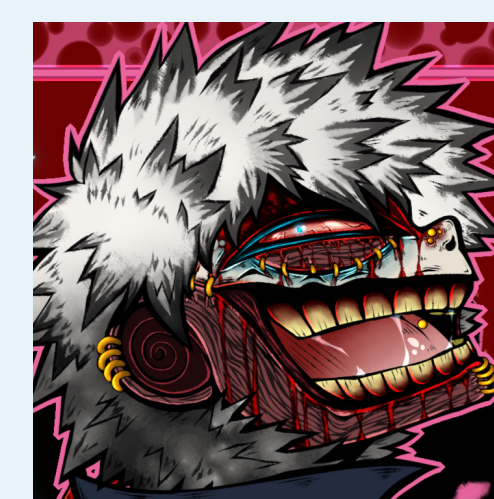


PAPERFICWRITER

P.48

🐦 paperficwriter

🔗 paperficwriter



NESTYGUTS

P.56

🐦 nestyguts

📷 nestyguts

TABLE OF CONTENTS



CHEWY

P.57

✉ ch3w2

✂ chewhy

t ch3w2



FELLYCATIVE

P.65

✉ fellycative

@ fellycative



PLUTO

P.66

✉ plutoversetm

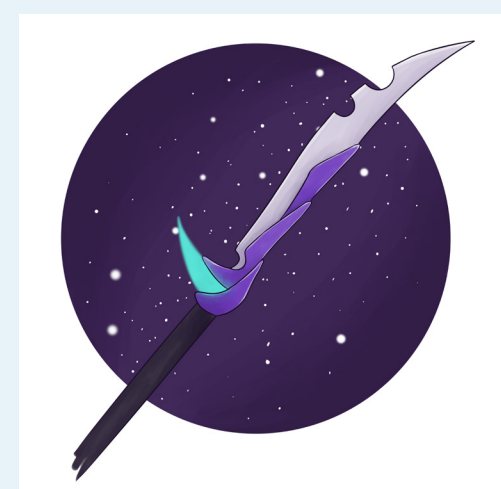


KACCHANSASS

P.72

✉ kacchansass

t kacchansass



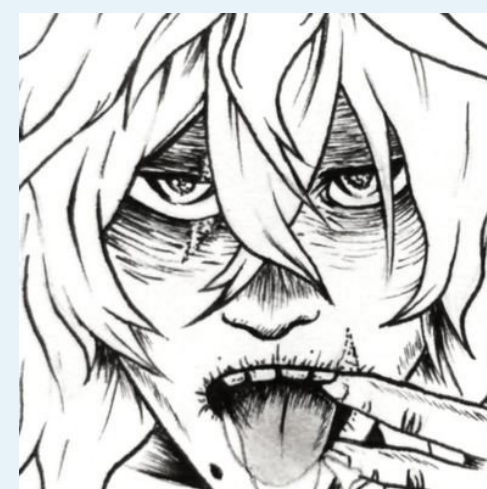
DINA S

P.73

✉ galacticlance

✂ galacticlance

t galacticlance



VINI

P.80

✉ wildelectricart

✉ wildelectricvin



KEI

P.81

✉ kamunamis

t kamunamis



SORA

P.88

✉ soranoharu24

@ soranoharu24



STARRY

P.89

✉ starryroyalty

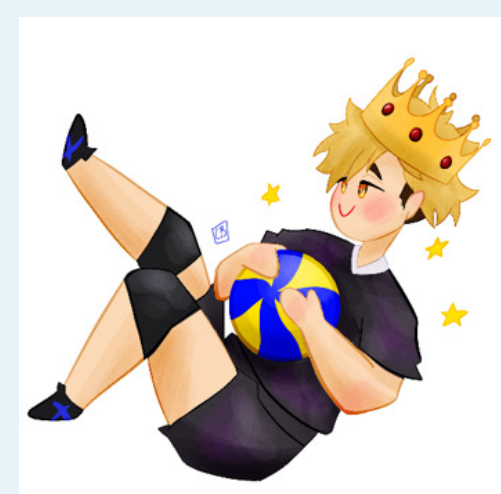
✂ starryroyalty



RYOKATSU

P.96

✉ Ryokatsudon



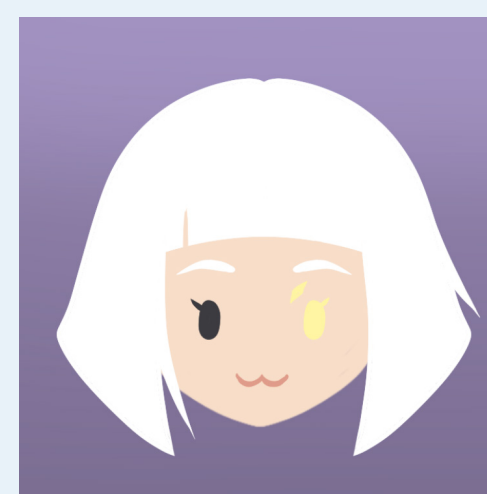
GREYEDSCALE

P.97

✉ greyedscale

✂ greyedscale

🌐 greyedscale.carrd.co



CARR

P.104

✉ carrsscrap

TABLE OF CONTENTS



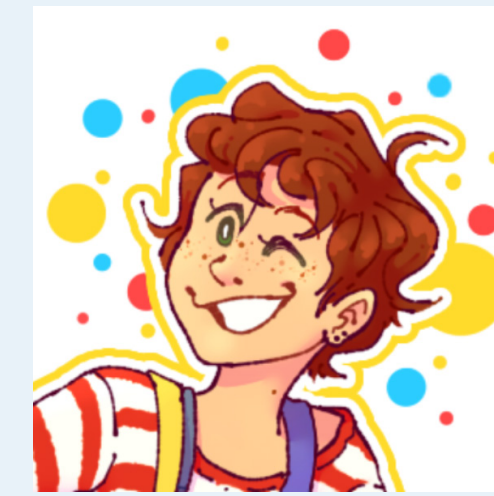
SOREN_BLEU_KUN

P.105

🐦 BleuSoren

🔗 Soren_Bleu_Kun

📺 soren-blue-kun



Z MAYS

P.112

🐦 Sir_SketchALot

📺 zo.mays

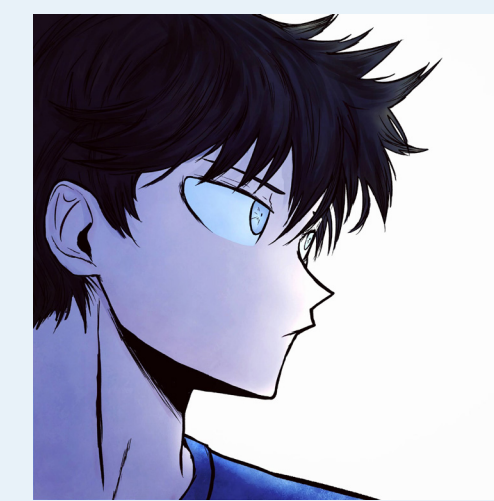


KIRIKAGS

P.113

🐦 kirikags

🔗 kirikags



QUIETSTRANGE

P.119

🐦 QuietStrange

📺 quietstrange



ACE

P.122

🐦 tiredasexual

🔗 tiredaroaceperson

ANOTHER TRIP AROUND THE SUN

By completist

February 12, xxxx

Polus

Tomorrow, the crew will move to MIRA HQ. All data has been secured, the ship is performing well, and the crew is intact.

—Nezu

When one manages to reach below the depths of the ship of MIRA HQ, a semblance of natural weather can be felt seeping through its walls.

As a general rule, most crew members stay above, like drowning men in an endless sea. Makes it easier to leave the ship, is what their superiors always say. But Nezu always feels his whiskers twitching at those words. There is something below, like there is something above.

MIRA HQ is a strange place, such that Nezu hasn't quite grasped yet. There are tremors in its halls and hushed whispers in its corners, unlabeled rooms and empty cabinets, dim-lighted spaces where the shadows feel ready to swallow him alive. The map shows everything headquarters should logically have, yet something creeps behind sometimes, sneaks into the corners of one's eyes, dodges when one turns.

Nezu has visited and stayed in MIRA HQ over the years he has gained sentience and thought processes similar to, if not surpassing, human capabilities. His search to find the origins of the impostors often ends in losing the entire crew, and sometimes, the ship itself. Yet MIRA stays the same—a dependable beacon with a deep well of secrets.

He walks Yagi Toshinori through its halls with the ease of someone with ingrained familiarity to it. Toshinori looms beside him, standing out in his stark yellow suit against his own white one. "The crew will stay here for a week before we leave for Polus. I hope that's enough time for you to integrate yourself, Yagi-san."

"Yes, sir. That's perfectly fine, thank you," comes the prompt response. There are times when Nezu wishes he could see his crew's expressions. Body language

makes do most of the time, but they can be fabricated, and the crumbs of memories Nezu sometimes remembers often involve something else.

"Very well then," he raises a hand to shake Toshinori's, and sees his reflection on the window of his suit. How disconcerting, to never truly see your reflection in your crewmate's eyes. "I hope you have a great stay here."

"Thank you, sir!"

Nezu wonders if his voice would be just as lively outside the suit.

February 13, xxxx

Private Quarters, MIRA HQ

Analysis of information from the previous expedition is still ongoing. There may not even be a lead on the origins of the impostors in there, but the system processors are taking longer and longer with each return.

Polus is just as big, and the crew has a nagging thought that even with all the expeditions sent from MIRA, nothing has been truly recovered. How strange.

Yagi Toshinori is officially part of our crew. He's still the powerful, strange man as before. The new suit may have lessened the charisma, but the air of mystery around All Might remains.

We will be staying at MIRA for a couple of days, at least until the analysis finishes. Snipe has offered to simultaneously integrate new information into the geodatabase during the wait— which could lessen the crew's time in limbo.

There are still echoes from below, and MIRA still faintly smells of blood.

—Nezu

Another general rule is that none of the crew removes their suits outside of their quarters. It is even advised to keep them on in private places, sans hygiene purposes.

Nezu abides by that. Most of the time, at least. But the stench of MIRA's halls reveal a lot, and the sensitivity of his senses can easily pick up the tiniest of changes. He follows the strange smell from his quarters, to the admin office, until he sees Toshinori clearing the trash in the cafeteria.

They stare at each other for a moment, and another, and *another*... Nezu is hyper-aware of the stillness of his tail inside his suit, the way his fur stands on end. He wonders if he's staring Toshinori in the eyes right now.

And then Toshinori coughs— a series of worrying hacks eerily similar to the echoes at nighttime.

All Might has sustained a severe injury from his last expedition, and it was explained by their superiors that this will be his first time out in the field again after a long period of recovery.

When the coughing subsides, Toshinori approaches him. An urge to take a step back tingles along Nezu's spine, like fingers raking over each vertebra.

He suppresses the urge by speaking first.

"Yagi-san, please take some rest if you need to. Maintenance of MIRA can be done by just half of the current crew; you can save your energy for when we reach and make the change to The Skeld."

He watches Toshinori fiddle with his fingers before nodding. "Thank you."

"How has your experience been so far with the crew?"

"Great! I enjoy spending time with them and doing tasks again. Snipe's aim at the asteroids is truly commendable."

Humming, Nezu lets his eyes roam Yagi's suit. Clean. Pristinely clean.

"We all do what we do best. I'm glad you're having a great time on the ship, Yagi-san."

"It's good to be back, sir!"

Nezu tries to imagine the smile behind the suit, comes up with nothing, then walks away.

February 14, xxxx
Admin Office, MIRA HQ

The crew is bonding at the cafeteria. Shouta's apprehension is evident, and his protectiveness of Eri clear as the blaring lights of an emergency alarm.

—Nezu

He spends the following days keeping Toshinori in his periphery. They do their tasks almost at the same time, moving across the ship simultaneously with Nezu always behind or ahead of their new crewmate.

Toshinori is still familiar with the ship, not once needing help in doing his own tasks. The crew is especially helpful too, always ready to offer a hand even before something has come up. Nezu observes him from a couple of steps away, not even bothering to move farther, or closer; not even knowing why he's still watching when Toshinori has already proven himself useful and somewhat trustworthy.

His laugh echoes across the cafeteria, mingling with Hizashi and Kayama's, and somehow, Nezu wonders why his subconscious has ever doubted Yagi Toshinori.

February 15, xxxx

The geodatabase has been fully updated, but the analysis has shown incomplete information. Several expeditions have already been made yet there are no significant improvements on the mapping project itself. To find the origin of the impostors, there has to be more.

Last night's dream shows the familiar halls of The Skeld, except the view is higher—taller—than normal. There were screams.

Yagi Toshinori is adapting well, and has earned the trust of most, if not all, of the crew. Meeting with the superiors is in two days, and Thirteen is becoming restless.

—Nezu

When Nezu sees Toshinori taking care of Eri, a knot of worry loosens in him. He does not know what to expect, but the sight of the two of them makes him more secure about the addition to his crew. Shouta is a looming figure behind them, always a little too close, always ready to intervene. His stance may still be threatening, but Nezu sees the tight curl of his hand loosen each day and each time Toshinori spends time with them.

Before he retires to his dorm, Thirteen hands him a flash drive they found from the storage room.

"I can't access it, so I don't know what's inside," they say, shrugging. The way their suit moves always makes him wonder who or what they are inside. "It could be nothing, but it could also be worth looking at."

Nezu nods, the movement so small he wonders if they see it at all. He clears his throat and gives an affirmative instead, placing the drive in his pocket. "Of course. Thank you, Thirteen."

February 16, xxxx
Laboratory, MIRA HQ

A plethora of strange smells and movements often comes from the Laboratory. The addition of a strange burnt smell is pungent, especially for senses as enhanced as mine; and the tingling sensation of being watched from the other side of the glass remains.

No one else has noticed, but Ectoplasm has been gone for a while.

—Nezu

The day before the meeting, Nezu stays inside his room.

Hizashi is broadcasting entertainment from the Communications room; the sound of music combined with his excited chatting with Toshinori penetrates the ship and surrounds his senses. He knows he should go out there, submit a scan at the Med Bay, see what's simmering at the Laboratory. There are a lot of things he should attend to, including making sure that Thirteen is in prime condition for the impending arrival and exchange at The Skeld, and that Toshinori is integrating himself well with the crew.

But still, he remains inside his quarters. It's a small space, with a bed on one side and a table opposite of it. The light from the computer monitor is the only thing illuminating the whole room, the color changing every time someone enters and exits the skywalk. His gaze flickers to the names everytime a new one is added.

09:15:21. *Higari Majima.*

10:55:47. *Kayama Nemuri.*

12:42:57. *Yagi Toshinori.*

15:23:44. *Aizawa Shouta, Eri.*

When Toshinori joins Hizashi at Communications, Nezu steps out of his room. He trudges through the familiar hallways, ignoring the disconnect between his

memories and the present before him. Majima, who is tinkering at the reactor, gives him a wave as he passes by.

Nezu stops before the Laboratory, peering inside the room only to find it pristinely clear. No sign of Ectoplasm anywhere, not on the empty beakers and flasks and tubes... certainly not on the blank whiteboard, nor the dishes empty of samples. He clasps his paws behind his back, humming to himself.

Ectoplasm has been gone for a day, yet nobody is talking about his disappearance; no one is talking to him about a possible disappearance of one of their crewmates. There is bliss in ignorance, but his sense could no longer afford to ignore it. Not when his memory is betraying the reality before him.

Whatever is happening here, Nezu is almost sure that the superiors are actively involved in it.

Tilting his head to peer more into the room, Nezu spies the broken glass merely thrown at the trash can, *Ectoplasm wouldn't do that...*

He returns to his quarters, a moment later, not even encountering any of the crew. He plugs the flash drive Thirteen has found into his computer and finds that he can access it. The adrenaline quickly declines when he finds it empty instead, not even a trace of security or coding.

And before he can think twice about it, he creates a back-up of his journal onto the drive, encrypting the files in layers and layers of code he is sure no one in his crew could possibly decrypt—except for one. It takes him five hours to finish, and by the time the monitor before him dims into sleep, the entire ship has turned quiet—her crew in deep slumber, except for her captain.

He slips off the chair and into the bed, feeling the smooth glide of his paws on the linen sheets as he lies down. Meeting with the superiors is in six hours, and Nezu lets his eyes close, hoping for one last dream to give him a clue.

Entering the dream is like diving into deep water. Suddenly, everything is muted; a quiet ringing in his ears, the feeling of being enveloped in something, the glide of his arms and legs against the current...

He ignores the instinct to keep his eyes closed.

Bright lights assault his vision, and Nezu instinctively turns his head away from the source. His heart hammers in his chest, the fur at the back of his neck and

arms rising. The air around him is damp, humid. And his nose is tickled at the shift in the air with every movement of whoever or whatever is surrounding him.

"How much does it remember?"

It? He grits his teeth at the insult. But then his mind suddenly begins to replay each memory he's had that didn't align with the present—almost an act of protest if not for the way it feels like each image is being tugged forward onto the forefront of his mind.

"Enough."

"Too much."

The exchange tells him that there are three different beings surrounding him, poking at his brain. Harsh panting reaches his ears and Nezu slowly opens his eyes along with the realization that he is the one panting. He feels them move away from him with the way the air somewhat clears and he can breathe again.

One by one, he checks his limbs: arms... legs... tail. His ear twitches at each minute sound in the background, whiskers fluttering with each breath. A burnt smell lingers in the air, mixed with the smell of iron.

And then, they are moving towards him again.

Nezu's eyes fall shut against the bright lights, "What—"

"Time to restart... Nezu."

When his eyes open again, he is standing in the cafeteria.

He takes a deep breath, inhaling the familiar scent of his suit. The crew is having their breakfast, chatting with each other about their tasks, the mundane. Shouta offers a seat beside him, and Nezu gingerly takes it, unable to shrug off the feeling of being watched.

Before him sits Yagi Toshinori, flanked on either side by Thirteen and Ectoplasm. Nezu doesn't need to perform a head count to know that his crew is complete. Albeit, he really can't point out why he would need to.

Yagi tilts his head at him, "Welcome back, sir!"

Nezu tries to imagine the smile behind the suit, tries to listen to something else aside from the enthusiasm lacing each word, comes up with nothing, then nods his assent.

"Glad to be back."



HAH?!

DON'T
WORRY,
I'LL HELP
YOU KILL
EVERYONE



OY!
BAKU!
BAKUBRO!

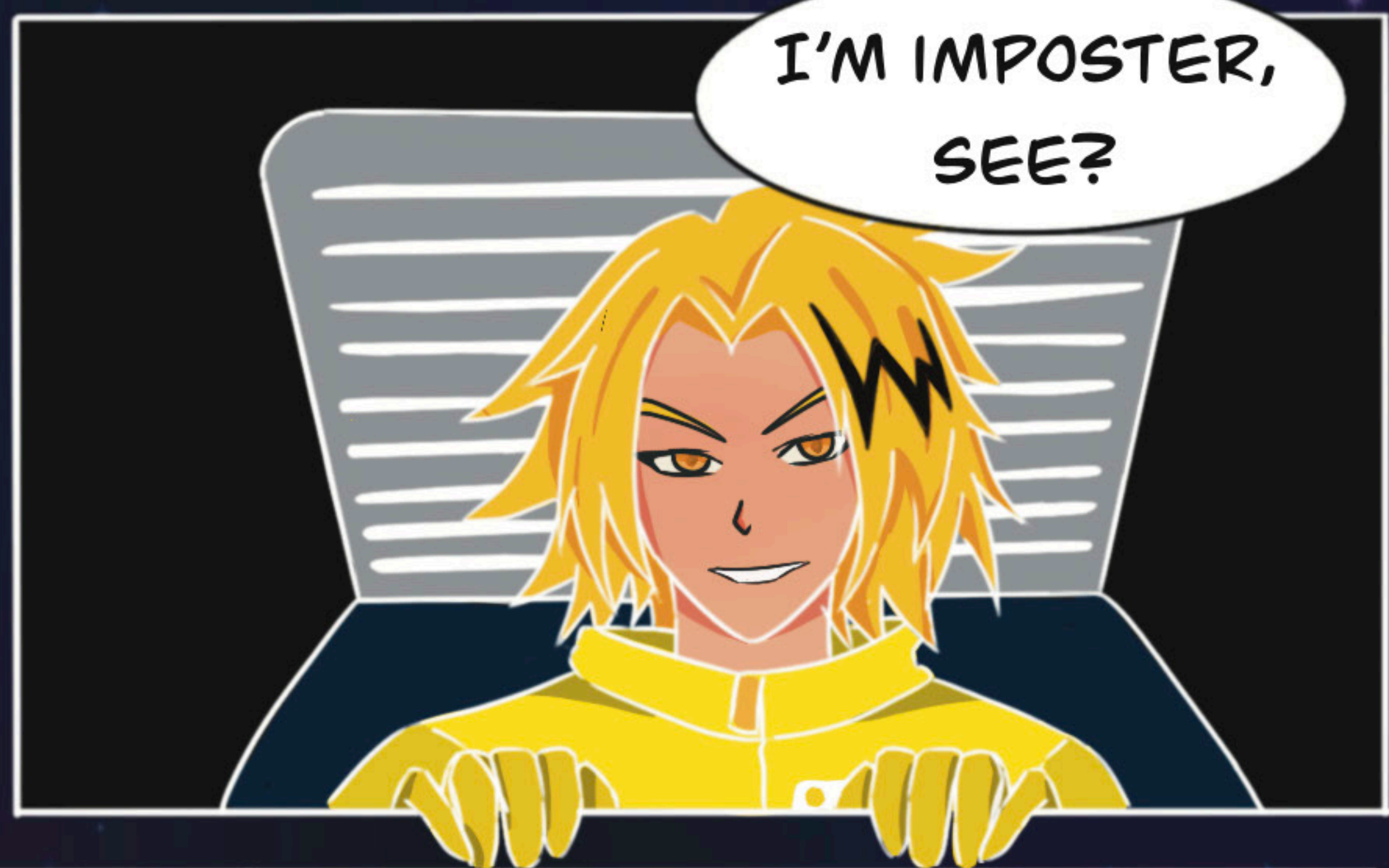


SHUT UP!

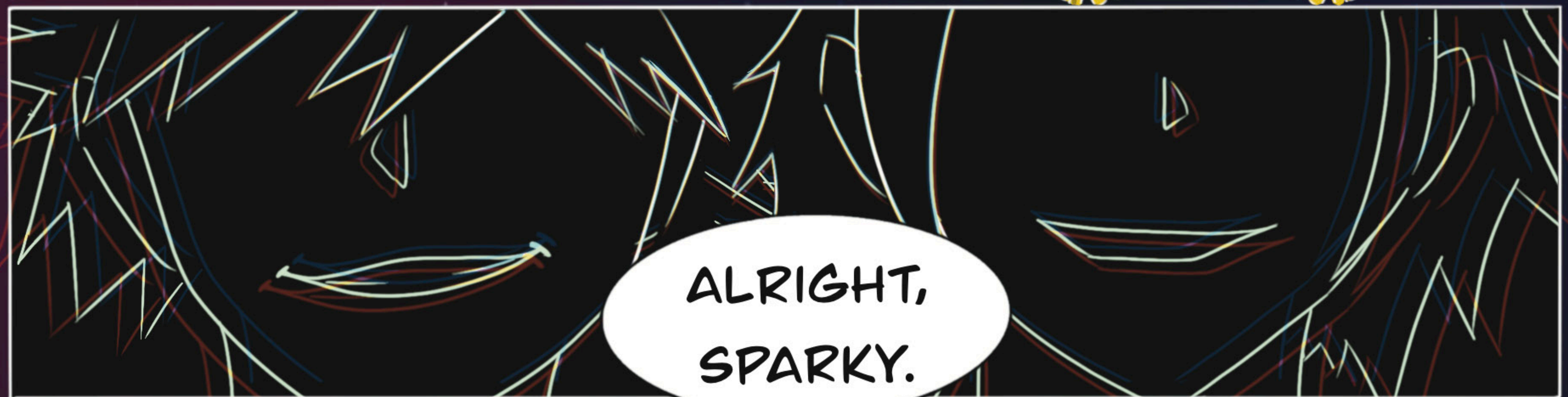
UPSET YOU'RE
NOT IMPOSTER?



JUST SAY
THE WORD,
AND I'LL KILL
THEM FOR
YOU!



I'M IMPOSTER,
SEE?



ALRIGHT,
SPARKY.

EUROPA

By labicheramure

The problem may have started because none of them knew each other. Previous Seeds had proven to be the most effective when working with people they had never met on Earth. Familiarity breeds contempt, or so an ancient Russian cosmonaut said, when asked. Unlike the ISS and the 20th century shuttle programs, Seeds were slated not to return to Earth for decades at a time. In space, they would only have each other.

Izuku believed he wouldn't need anything but space. It was hard to make friends after Kacchan decided he didn't want Izuku around, so he sat up alone with his telescope, watching the bright void that was his only dream. In seventh grade, he built a clock that showed the position of the planets. In ninth grade, he was accepted into the group that would make up Japan's first Seeds. They trained for seven years, separated into three classes which would be mixed into three crews of people who had never met before.

The first crew would be put into stasis to make a speedy four-year journey to Saturn's largest moon, Titan, to more closely study its atmosphere. Then they would take another year just to orbit Saturn and study it using probes. The second group was heading for the autonomous space station orbiting Mars, to begin using it as a base from which to build the first structure on the red planet. The third crew, Izuku's crew, was set to make the first human landing on Jupiter's moon, Europa.

While he slept in stasis Izuku dreamt, or imagined he dreamt, that he was fourteen again. He followed Kacchan down the hall to the entrance ceremony, the only time the three classes would all be together. The only face he remembered from that time was Kacchan's. Everyone else was a blur of light and color, so familiar as to be unknowable. In his dream, someone he didn't know came to greet him. That person seemed to coalesce out of the air itself as he reached out to shake Izuku's hand. His palm was very cold.

When he woke, he was not at the entrance ceremony, but shoved into his narrow stasis tube. A cold, pale hand gently held his. The first human face Izuku saw in six years smiled at him, almost too comforting.

This was how he met Todoroki Shouto.

Waking up was like coming up from the very bottom of a pool. Gravity was pushing on him, pulling him down, offering the enticing prospect of resting, and remaining comfortable.

Awareness came back to Izuku very slowly. First, there was light, the familiar lamplit glow of the ship's evening light setting. He could hear the beep of a heart monitor. Breathing felt strange. He thought he could smell sunlight. Opening his eyes, Izuku listened carefully to his own exhale. An oxygen mask.

The MedBay. His cheek was warm against the sanitary pillow. It was so nice he thought it would be fine to go back to sleep. Groaning, Izuku rolled over on his other side. Right away, he knew something was wrong. On this side, he couldn't hear the crinkly noise that fresh sanitary pillows made. More than that, this side had something wet on it.

Izuku sat up so quickly it made him lightheaded. He closed his eyes, holding his oxygen mask to breathe deeply. His left ear was wet. It ached, but the bigger problem was that he couldn't hear anything out of it.

Rapid decompression has been known to burst someone's eardrums. Izuku could almost see it written in his old notebook. It explained the oxygen mask as well. Things began to come together, and his panic abated a bit.

They must have changed their minds, he thought. Everyone came to rescue me, and now I'm being treated for the effects of being suddenly pushed out to space. Yes. Yes, that had to be it.

Moving slowly, Izuku sat up against the back of the bed. His muscles were still stiff; there was no telling how long he had been asleep. He was cold, too, so he pulled the blankets up close. Someone had stripped the other medical cots of their blankets and piled them on top of him while he slept. Izuku smiled.

Izuku heard the familiar pneumatic hiss of the medical bay doors. It sounded like it was coming from two meters farther than he knew the doors to be, and he felt uneasy for a moment before realizing that it must be due to his burst eardrum. Todoroki stood at the door; his hand paused on the manual close button. But he wasn't Todoroki Shouto, not quite. Half of his body was covered in a shining, obsidian-black material, smoothing out to conform to his shape as it got further down his arm. Part of his face was masked in this strange material as well, shaped into a jagged white grin along his jawline. His left eye glowed curiously from within, like a distant planet in the blackness of space.

"Todoroki... kun?" Izuku said, his voice such a faint whisper that even he could barely hear it. Todoroki's startled expression settled into a smile that looked cruel paired with the shark-like teeth on the other half of his face.

"Midoriya," he breathed, like a sigh of relief. He appeared at Izuku's bedside like a fish granted a sudden burst of speed, swimming through the air. It was a movement as beautiful as it was immeasurably wrong. "Midoriya, how are you feeling? Can you breathe well enough?"

Izuku tried to press himself subtly away from his crewmate. Todoroki only moved closer.

"My ear. There was blood on the pillow." The other man nodded along, as if they were discussing a routine checkup, and not the results of being forced out of an airlock. "I, um, I can breathe fine. The oxygen mask must be helping."

Again, Todoroki smiled in a way that would be a comfort in any other scenario.

"Good. I was worried," he said. He bowed somewhat awkwardly. "I'm sorry. I didn't help you right away. The others -"

"Where are they, Todoroki-kun?"

Todoroki's expression darkened for the first time. The blue light of his left eye flickered.

"They tried to kill you," he said, his tone almost forcibly flat. "If I wasn't able to naturally survive in a vacuum, you would be dead."

Naturally. The word wedged into the folds of his brain, walking back through all the knowledge he had of Todoroki Shouto. None of them knew each other before. They each woke up and met for the first time on the ship. An imposter would be able to glean most of the needed knowledge from what was already sent through to the unmanned probes on Ganymede. But they had ID photos already taken. An imposter would have to be able to change his appearance enough to fool their scanners.

Naturally.

"You're not Todoroki Shouto," said Izuku. He scooted back even further than before, eying the door. There was a ten-second delay when it opened. Could he make it in time?

"No, I'm not." The imposter sounded almost hurt. "Does that matter? You never met Todoroki Shouto. The crewmate you've known for three months is

me. I'm the one who held my breath to bring you in from outside. After your friends voted to kill you."

"Because of you! You killed Kirishima, right?"

Thinking about it, nothing else made sense. Todoroki was the first person he saw after the emergency meeting alarm went off. He was closing a vent. Izuku thought it was weird, but then everything else happened. Then one of his friends was dead, a tiny hole right over his heart. It smelled like burnt flesh and melted plastic. If he focused, Izuku could smell it now, his vision blurring as he made to leap toward the door.

There was a noise like glass breaking in reverse. Todoroki reached for him, his arm stretching and distorting like molten glass. A cloud of steam erupted from his crewmate's mouth. When it cleared, Todoroki's arm was a meter long black icicle, blocking Izuku's path.

"Please, Midoriya," he said, breath still rising in white clouds. "Let me explain myself."

Izuku didn't really want to, but Todoroki clearly didn't intend to give him a choice. Taking a fortifying breath, he sat back down on the bed.

"Okay. Fine." He tried to look the other man in the face, even though he knew his voice was shaking. "But I'll ask the questions, got it? And you, um, answer them."

If Izuku didn't know better, he would say there was a smile at the corner of Todoroki's mouth when he answered him. "Understood."

"Who are you?"

"I'm not human, but I think you knew that," Todoroki said. "I'm a genetic chimera, a hybrid made to survive in extreme environments. You didn't ask, but I'm from the moon you call Europa. Beneath the ice mantle, if you were also wondering why no one ever noticed."

Izuku wasn't wondering, but Todoroki didn't need to know that. "Why are you here? And where is the real Todoroki Shouto?"

"My mission was originally to infiltrate your crew to prevent you from studying Europa close enough to learn about us. It's changed a little since then."

"And Todoroki?"

The imposter frowned, a stunningly human look for someone who just told Izuku he was not. "The human Todoroki Shouto is dead. I killed him by

sabotaging his stasis tube and disposed of his body through the garbage chute before any of our crewmates woke up.”

Izuku felt sick. A human being, a Seed with the same dream as them, killed in his sleep and then. Disposed of, like garbage. Like Izuku almost was, if not for the murderer in front of him. He swallowed, awkwardly pulling a blanket over his lap.

“What about Kirishima?” he asked. The imposter Todoroki closed his eyes for a moment. His deformed arm twitched, causing his sharp fingers to scrape loudly across the metal walls. He opened them again and looked at Izuku as if he were pleading for something.

“It was an accident.” Todoroki’s cold, flat affect was gone. In its place was something almost gentle. “I didn’t bring anything with me for this mission. I had to use this ship’s communications system to make my reports. Kirishima-kun caught me doing that last night. I knew I wouldn’t be able to explain it away. I panicked.”

Izuku wanted to be angrier than he was. Because Todoroki panicked, one of his friends was dead. He had almost died. Shouldn’t he want to kill him? He searched inside himself for a hint of that feeling but found only something cold and heavy.

Todoroki wasn’t the one to suggest voting.

“What... happened then?”

“I escaped through the vent. You saw me. I can change my body shape to a certain extent. It helps me move around the ship.”

Izuku couldn’t help but let out a short, hysterical laugh. He imagined Todoroki rolling himself up and squeezing himself into the vent, sliding through the ship like a deformed snake. Laughing made his ear hurt. He’d almost forgotten about it.

“You’re tired,” Alien Todoroki said with finality. “Sorry. The scanner said you needed at least four hours of rest.”

There was another scraping noise as Todoroki’s arm lit up from within, steaming slightly. Slowly, it shrank back into its proper shape and color, though it remained slightly transparent, like frosted glass.

“Wait. I have one more question,” Izuku said. “Where are the others?”

The imposter, who he could not stop thinking of as Todoroki Shouto, was quiet for a moment. When he looked at Izuku, he seemed sad, but not particularly sorry. "...In the storage room. I can't let you see them."

Izuku's objections were cut off before he could even speak by an unfamiliar chime; something almost too high for him to hear. Todoroki pulled out his tablet, silencing the chime with a series of quick and inhuman movements. He gestured again, and the overhead lights cut off, leaving only the scanner's screen and the emergency lighting on the floor. Izuku didn't need to look at the door to know what else the gesture had done.

"Todoroki, wait!" he said. Todoroki ignored him, turning away. Izuku stood up, but it made him dizzy, his head swimming so much he had to sit back down. When he could see again, Todoroki was gone, the opened vent clattering behind him.

"Damn it!"

It took Izuku thirty minutes to open the door's control panel with a scalpel and a pair of surgical scissors, and another ten to detach and reattach the wires to open it up. Outside the MedBay, the ship was quiet and dark. Each footstep echoed unevenly through the narrow hallways. Izuku had to hold his hand against his ear to keep his balance.

The door to the cafeteria was shut and locked, so he had to take the long way around to the storage room in the center of the ship. As he grew closer, he smelled it. The stomach-churning scent of burned plastic grew stronger as Izuku grew closer. By the time he rounded the corner by the electrical room, he could hardly breathe for how strong it was.

It wasn't like he didn't know what Todoroki meant by "in the storage room". Izuku knew from the start that there was a good chance that his crewmates had ended up like the other Todoroki, incinerated, disposed of. It was different, though, when he reached the locked door at the end of the hall. It was still warm to the touch.

Nice to meet you, Deku-kun!

He didn't exactly notice he was crying, just that his vision was blurry, and his throat was sore. He wanted to beg for forgiveness for not figuring out the truth sooner, for being alive when they were dead. At the same time, he wanted to ask them why it was so easy to cast him out, what about him made him seem like a killer. Was it the same thing that made Kacchan want to stop being friends, back when they were kids?

“Midoriya.”

Cold. There were two hands on him, and they were very cold, so cold that Izuku lurched forward to escape their grasp. He stumbled into the door and quickly turned around, unwilling to show his back to the imposter. Todoroki had changed into another uniform and shed his eerie black mask, revealing the bright blue eye and red hair that inspired so many questions from their friends. It was a rare condition, he said, in which a pair of twins merge inside their mother’s womb. Seeing him looking so human broke something in Izuku, made him launch himself at Todoroki with the full weight of his small body.

“I’ll kill you!”

It was like trying to hit safety glass. Izuku’s pathetic punch bounced off Todoroki’s chest, making it easy for him to grab both of Izuku’s hands. He held them there, immovable as Izuku tried in vain to tug his wrists away. Desperate, he tried to headbutt Todoroki’s sharp chin, but it just left him dizzy as the noise and the hit rattled his skull. Todoroki squeezed his hands, his fingers heating up as if in warning.

“Midoriya,” he said again. “Listen to me. I got a call from my father just now. I told you my orders had changed, right? Right after I saved you, he told me to kill everyone on the ship. But I’ve convinced him to let me take you home with me, as a specimen.”

Slowly, slowly, the fight drained from Izuku’s body. “Speci-men...?”

“It was just an excuse. I won’t let him do anything to hurt you. You’re the first friend I’ve ever had, Midoriya. I’ll do anything to keep you safe.”

The weight of despair brought him to his knees. Todoroki went with him, pulling him into his arms in an awkward parody of comfort. Below them, somewhere Izuku could not see, Europa’s haunting glow lit up the void. He wanted to see it from the sky, just one more time. His beautiful, final home.



FIRE IN THE HOLE

By MahoganyDoodles

Disgusting, creaking, oil-covered, rusted metal was all this ship was made of. This broken, run-down hull of an excuse for a spaceship. Run by the precious *Hero Commission*, or so their crew was named. They knew nothing about successful leadership. The sorry state of their home was entirely their fault, and Overhaul intended to correct that.

He kept to the center of the hall, carefully avoiding drips and piles of rust. Where the Hero Commission had failed, he would succeed. The Shie Hassaikai would rise to glory on a clean ship, one with a regular chores schedule that would ensure the ship exceeded the cleanliness standards of even the great ISSA, the Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association. After taking possession of this craft, that cleanliness would be the first point on his detailed, spreadsheet-tracked journey to galaxy-wide Yakuza control.

Now, if only one of those pesky crewmates would make an appearance so he could continue bringing his gang to power. Down in electrical, they were far enough away from the main body of the ship to avoid drawing attention; there were no cameras in the area, so even if one of those lazy crewmates that spent all their time in Security rather than doing more useful tasks (such as cleaning, as he had mentioned several times at the last all-crew meeting), they wouldn't be able to spot his treachery. A few dozen more murders, and the Shie Hassaikai would be the dominant alliance on the ship before those idiots even had a chance to realize what was going on. With the ship under their control, there would be no limit to what they could do.

At the end of the hall, his eyes widened at a flash of color. He ducked back, carefully tugging a surgical gown, hairnet, shoe covers, face shield, and an additional set of surgical gloves over the pair he already wore. No infectious transmissions for him.

PPE in place, he rounded the corner, knife drawn, to see a body lying on the ground. One of his Eight Bullets must have already beaten him to it.

Except... that roadkill-tan fur coat looked oddly like Deidoro's.

Fucking drunk *again* and sleeping it off, then. He scowled under his mask, stalking over to the figure. "Wake up!" he hissed, kicking Deidoro in the ribs.

His torso slid across the floor with the force of the kick, leaving a bloody streak on the yellowing linoleum. He froze, then whipped his head back to where his legs still laid, the body split in half right where it had been carved neatly through the spine.

...what the *FUCK*.

They were the ones who were supposed to be doing the killing... one of his own would never, ever think of doing this; they would never dream of disobeying him. So... someone else was trying to take control of this ship.

There was an impostor among them.

The emergency meeting alarm blared above him the second he called the body in on the All Might-branded walkie-talkie built into each of their uniforms, cursing Deidoro's incompetence to go and get himself killed all the while. Overhaul just had to do Every. Little. Thing. Didn't he.

At the least the discovery of Deidoro's body would throw some suspicion off of them, he mused while disposing of his garb in the chute. After the first five murders, things had gotten a little hot under the collar. Although part of that had been due to Endeavor's meaty, sweaty fist choking him out and demanding to know his whereabouts on the evening of May 5th at 8:15 PM.

The sounds of footfalls echoed behind him, and Overhaul took a moment to look at the body at his feet. Deidoro's mask had fallen off; the small, curved beak that identified him as one of their own. Disgusting, the blank-eyed stare on his face. Overhaul toed the mask back into place with his foot, just as the others arrived on the scene.

They all assembled in the cafeteria, Rappa fraternizing with the enemy as he plowed through a veritable mountain of food with the yellow-clad crewmate.

"We need to develop a list of all possible suspects, and thoroughly and methodically vet each one," Iida said, slicing the air with his hand. "We will determine the suspect through the process of elimination and using all available data. First, we must collect that data." He swirled on Overhaul, hand chopping through the air again. "Provide us all details surrounding the murder you reported earlier."

Overhaul began to recap, bored. How he had been going down to electrical, how he rounded the corner... Eyeing the suspicious faces around the table, he tried to infuse a little emotion in his speech, choking up a little as he got to the part about Deidoro. Now was the time to let these people think he cared about Deidoro's death beyond frustration at losing an asset at a critical—

"There's been another murder."

Everyone's heads shot up as one, attention on Shin Nemoto as he marched down the hall, interrupting the meeting. He paused at the entrance to the cafeteria, pulling his hat off and holding it between his hands, head bowed. "There's another body, and it's... gruesome. Mimic was half-sucked into a wall, as if he had been eaten."

The rule-obsessed pretty boy shot up. "It's not possible for something like that to happen," Iida said. "Tell us the truth."

"I am telling you the truth."

The entire room began murmuring, unsettled in the face of Nemoto's blunt honesty. Another body? So soon? There were more in more, accelerating in number and pace.

Aizawa stared unblinking into the hyperspace passing the window, lost in thought as he contemplated out loud. "What could the significance be? What logical benefit could these continued killings derive, when a minimum of 80 people are required to operate the ship..."

Shrill sirens made them all jump, the blaring alarms signaling the ever-increasing systems failures.

Gritting his teeth, Aizawa's head shot back to the crowd in the cafeteria. Speaking of which, their meeting has taken too long. The ship was falling apart at the seams, required constant repair, and now they had to cut their investigation short.

"Your team!" he barked at a head of messy white hair. "Get to the reactors. Midoriya, yours to O2. The others to—"

"Aw man, we always get the worst jobs!" Twice complained. "This stuff is radioactive, you know!"

"It's controlled, you idiot," Dabi cursed at him, panting as they ran.

"Hey, wait up!" A feathered figure zoomed up behind them, Hawks slowing to a jog once he reached Dabi's side.

Just as they reached the reactor room, Spinner butted in, "I agree with Twice. Haven't you seen Godzilla? How do you think he ended up like that? *Radiation.*" He paused for dramatic effect. "That's why they always send the same people there every time. *We're expendable.*"

Twice shivered, jumping a little as the machinery clanked, all of them working to control the overheated circuits. "Yeah! But what scares me even more is all these murders!" He cowered in on himself. "They're gonna get me!"

"Awww, Twicex! You don't have to worry, I'm here to protect you!" Toga said, squeezing him into a tight hug that made him squeak a little at the suffocation. He hugged her back, resting his head on top of hers. "Aren't you just a little bit nervous?" he asked.

Toga pulled back, beaming up at him. "Nope!"

A wrench soared past them, Twice narrowly ducking and the metal striking Spinner in the head instead. "Shut up and get to work," Shigaraki snapped over Spinner's cursing. "We already have to fix this broken thing every day, so get to work and fix it so we can be done." His red eyes didn't leave Hawks as the rest of the group turned back to their work.

Hawks picked the wrench up from the ground and tried to figure out where to start working, considering that all the previous repairs had been very shoddy, and any one could be the source of the problem. He turned to Twice and nudged him, leaning close. "Man... THAT was an overreaction. Huh? Huh?" he said, turning to Spinner and Toga, who just rolled their eyes.

Twice burst out laughing, seizing Hawks around the middle and pulling him into a tight hug. "We're gonna be best friends, I can just tell!" he said, eyes bright and shining.

Overhaul snarled, pacing the glistening white tiles of his quarters, unable to contain the rage that vented out of him. "—and we would have gotten away with it, too, if it weren't for those meddling crewmates! Interfering with my plans to capture the ship to return the Yakuza to our deserved glory—"

"Overhaul, I mean no disrespect," Hekiji Tengai said calmly, cutting through the cloud of rage which surrounded his leader. "However, I wish to discuss your

plans. How does murdering innocents to overtake this ship correlate with our ultimate goal of returning the Yakuza to power?"

Red clouded Overhaul's vision, the red of a sanitation inspection violation notice. "I should have known an apathetic monk like you would have never understood my vision of the Yakuza's glory!" he snapped, spraying spittle within his mask. Go—get out! Go join those peace-loving crewmates you love so much!"

Hekiji's face didn't shift, either unaffected by the outburst or just as apathetic as Overhaul claimed. He bowed his head, then walked out, the doors sliding shut behind him. Overhaul sighed. Finally, some peace and quiet to fume in peace to his underlings.

Seconds later, a scream and the whoosh of wings rattled the metal walls.

Rappa pried open the doors so fast they sparked and groaned, head shooting from side to side in search of the murderer to challenge them to a fight. To their surprise, Hawks still stood over Tengai's body, bloodstains splattered up and down his jacket and fist raised, poised to knock.

"You!" Rappa roared. "I'm going to beat you into a chicken nugget for what you did to Tengai, birdbrain!"

"No, no, it wasn't me, honest!" Hawks insisted, hands raised in defense. "I didn't see who killed him!"

"Call an emergency meeting, Chrono," Overhaul said, scowling down at Hawks over the top of his beaked mask. "We've found our traitor."

"—and that," Overhaul finished his tirade, "is why Hawks is the traitor, the *impostor* among us!"

"Hey, relax!" Hawks protested again. "I already told you this really nasty-looking knife was coming for *me* and I jumped out of the way just in time! There was someone else there, and the doorlogs prove it!"

"I agree with Hawks," Best Jeanist added, examining the printed log books before him. "Your argument is fraying like unhemmed denim!"

"You jumped out of the way of a knife?" Twice asked? Shoulders sagging. He turned to Toga, mouth turning dramatically down in a frown. "I thought you were just going to kill those lame plague doctor wannabes! That wasn't very cash money of you to try to kill my new friend," he pouted.

The entire crew froze at once, eyes wide and jaws dropped as they stared at the young girl everyone had at some point thought was a little batshit, but nobody thought she was *actually* murderous. "You did *what*?" Present Mic screeched over the intercom.

Toga jumped back from the cafeteria tables, whipping two knives from her utility belt. "That's right. Those yucky Yakuza tried to kill Deku-kun, and Ochako-chan, and Tsu-chan all at once. I couldn't let them stack kill my boyfriend and girlfriends."

The three flushed immediately and jumped in shock, Deku squeaking out, "Your *what*?"

In that moment, no amount of reporting, emergency meetings, or sabotage could have stopped Himiko Toga. She leaped toward the Shie Hassaikai's table, eyes trained on Overhaul and knives glinting. One half of the cafeteria devolved into fighting, body after body dropping to the floor as Toga drew closer to Overhaul.

"Soooo," Hawks began, standing in shock on the other side of the cafeteria with the rest of the *Hero Commission* crew. "Everybody agrees I'm not a traitor?"

"Oh, he's a traitor all right." Dabi stood suddenly, kicking over the bench he had been sitting on and raising his arms before his group of friends. "He's been working for the Commission for months. Hawks has been trying to get close to me for months now to steal our data logs because they show the corruption of the *Hero Commission's* rulers, intentionally keeping the ship broken and decrepit so we rely on their supplies and leaders, especially, and this will come as a surprise to all of you, my long-lost father, En—"

"Dabi, we've known that you're related to Enji pretty much since you joined the crew," Hawks complained. "Fuyumi invited you to family dinner just last week!"

Dabi jumped at him with a yell, the flamethrower in his hands exploding into blue flames. The rest of his gang jumped into action, Twice going to join Toga in her battle to murder the wannabe crime lords while the others attacked the other Pro crew members.

"Eraserhead..." Shigaraki stood in front of him.

Between the adult Pro crew of the *Hero Commission*, the League of Villains (not a name that convinced anyone they were as noble as they claimed), and the Shie Hassaikai all in-fighting and backstabbing, the students on the ship didn't quite know what to do. The revelation that several of them had almost

been murdered, and that Toga was also unconditionally and irrevocably in love with them didn't help. They stood frozen in place, baffled as they watched the drama unfold before them.

"Hey." Kirishima nudged Kaminari with his elbow. He leaned in close to the blond's ear then whispered, "Wasn't one of us supposed to be the traitor?"



IN DARKNESS, FIND SERENITY

By Hiba

One body could only house one soul. That was what Tokoyami Fumikage had always believed... until Dark Shadow came along. What he thought was once his and his alone, was now split between himself and this sentient creature he had no control over.

When Dark Shadow had suddenly popped out of his body like some scene from a horror movie, Fumikage was terrified. Dark Shadow had been equally terrified, so the young boy didn't feel too bad about the surprised squawk he let out at the time. While many feared this darkness, Fumikage found this new friend comforting. His parents called it his protector, but Dark Shadow was more than that. As far as Fumikage was concerned, Dark Shadow was his guardian.

So it was no surprise when Fumikage was gearing up for his next mission and Dark Shadow appeared before him, blanketing him in a layer of darkness; a safe space just for the two of them where no prying eyes or ears could catch them.

"Fumikage?" Dark Shadow inquired softly, unlike its usual boisterous self when it was around others.

"What is it, Dark Shadow?"

Dark Shadow eyed him carefully. "You're uncomfortable about something."

Fumikage huffed out a laugh. Dark Shadow was never one for subtlety, but it also never pried unless it knew Fumikage needed an outlet. "I suppose I'm a little worried about today's mission. Even though Hagakure-san and I are a pair, I still worry about how we'll fare during the trip."

Dark Shadow tapped its chin. "Well, there've never been any problems since the three of us teamed up. I think we make a pretty great team!"

"That's... true." Fumikage unconsciously stuck his hands into familiar darkness as he began to smooth his thumbs across Dark Shadow's ethereal face; a nervous habit he had developed at a young age.

Dark Shadow cooed softly at the ministrations. "But there's something else that you're worried about."

Fumikage opened his mouth to answer when a bubbly voice cut through the darkness. "Tokoyami-kun, Shadow-chan! It's time to get ready to board the ship!"

At the sound of Tooru's voice, Dark Shadow released them from their enclosed space and floated happily towards the seemingly empty space suit standing at the door. Tooru let out a giggle as Dark Shadow wrapped itself around her.

"Dark Shadow!" Fumikage scolded lightly. "Sorry, Hagakure-san. You know how he is."

"No problem at all!" She stroked her hands through Dark Shadow's ethereal body. "Right, Shadow-chan?"

"Right!" Dark Shadow chirped.

Fumikage gave an exasperated sigh before looking at Tooru. "Ready for the mission?"

"You know I am!" There was a pregnant pause as the girl dropped her hands from Dark Shadow's face. Fumikage didn't need to see her to know that Tooru's demeanor had changed. *'Ah, she's in mission mode now,'* Fumikage thought to himself.

"Per usual, invisibility will be on while we're aboard the ship. I know you don't need the reminder, but please make sure no one knows I'm there. If you need help, you can always reach me through our personal comms. While you're doing the onboarding, I'll go on ahead to make sure our comms are on a different frequency than the ship's. Other than that, we should be smooth sailing like usual."

Tooru's calm tone as the teens discussed their pre-mission debrief helped calm some of Fumikage's nerves, but he still couldn't quite shake the uneasiness – an unusual turn of events since the more serious side Tooru displayed during their missions usually helped keep Fumikage grounded; it was the reason why their duo worked as well as it did. On their first mission together, Fumikage had had his doubts. Just because they had invisibility on their side, didn't mean that their personalities would mesh. However after witnessing this flip in personality, the teen had quickly changed his mind. Plus, Dark Shadow had taken a liking to the invisible girl, so there wasn't much he could do in protest.

As the two walked through the hallway leading to the spacecraft they were about to board, Fumikage heard a soft giggle before Tooru's suit disappeared

from sight. Chuckling at his partner's enthusiasm, Fumikage also prepared himself for the task at hand: getting the ship to its destination safely.

"Ready, Dark Shadow?"

"Ready!"

As the newly formed crew went through introductions in the cafeteria, Fumikage felt Tooru tap twice against his hip to notify him of where she was. Depending on which side she tapped, he would know which direction he would need to go when the ship departed. *'I'll be starting on the left, then.'* As a sign of confirmation, he rested his hand casually on his other hip.

With how large Polus was, it wasn't unusual for recruits from different Polus-owned spacecrafts drifting through space to gather a small group together to make routine trips to Mira HQ or Polus. From what Fumikage was told, each ship was in charge of recruits of different professions. The ship Fumikage and Tooru were aboard instructed their recruits on different security measures and what actions they should take to ensure the ship reached its destination safely.

"Hey, you," a gruff voice barked, bringing Fumikage back to the task at hand.

Fumikage looked in the direction of the voice, narrowing his eyes at the blond who was currently glaring darkly at him. A green-haired boy – Midoriya, Fumikage reminded himself – was frantically waving his hands at the hot-headed blond to try to pacify the situation. The two were introduced as partners, but the pair was... interesting. "Yes, Bakugou?"

"You gonna introduce yourself so we can get a move on?" Bakugou growled, ignoring the poor attempts Midoriya was making to get him to stop. "We don't have all day."

"My apologies. I didn't mean to let my mind wander." Fumikage scanned the group before standing a little straighter. "My name is Tokoyami Fumikage. I'm a recruit from Spacecraft FX389. My quirk is Dark Shadow. I hope we have a good trip together."

Midoriya perked up. "You don't have a partner?"

"Ah, when we're aboard a new ship, Dark Shadow doesn't come out until I give him the okay. One moment." Fumikage took a small step back. "You may come out and greet the others, Dark Shadow."

Dark Shadow appeared in a flurry of shadows. "I'm Dark Shadow! It's nice to meet ya!"

Fumikage watched in hidden amusement as his new crewmates let out unanimous sounds of surprise. '*Some things never change.*' He nodded his head towards Dark Shadow as he introduced his partner. "This is Dark Shadow. Even though we share a body, he is his own entity. As you can see, he is quite friendly. Please treat him well."

A robotic voice echoed through the room, bringing the eight crewmates to attention. **"PREPARATIONS FOR POLUS SPACECRAFT TL589 ARE NOW COMPLETE. DESTINATION: MIRA HQ. ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL: ONE HOUR."**

As Dark Shadow returned to its dormant state inside Fumikage, the boy heard a light crackle from the earpiece before Tooru's voice came through in a whisper. "We're in the all-clear, Tokoyami-kun. I'll help out when I can, but you know the drill."

Checking his map and wrist communicator, Fumikage made his way towards his first task. "Let's go, Dark Shadow!"

"Roger that!"

As Fumikage completed another task, he still couldn't shake that feeling of discomfort he felt prior to boarding the spacecraft. At first, he had just equated it to the usual nervousness that anyone would feel when they encountered a new group of people on board an unfamiliar ship. Since it never got in the way of him completing his tasks, he never truly questioned this feeling. Plus, if Tooru and Dark Shadow had yet to say anything, then maybe it was just his nerves after all.

But this time, though. This time felt different.

They were now about halfway to Mira HQ, and the discomfort that usually dissipated within minutes still lingered. If anything, Fumikage felt worse than usual; like something was pulling at the back of his mind, driving him to insanity at an agonizingly slow pace. Slowly and lightly at first, just pinpricks here and there. And once he'd gotten used to those pricks, whatever was grabbing hold of him was now latching on stronger than ever.

Admittedly, three of his crewmates had died during the trip, so he could easily blame the growing discomfort on that. However this was not unusual, and

strangely enough, had never bothered him before... or rather, it had stopped affecting him after the first few missions he went on. This was the reason why he and Tooru were here to begin with: to catch the impostors trying to sabotage the mission.

Except they were hitting dead end after dead end; even Tooru was getting frustrated, which was rare for the bubbly girl. Fumikage wouldn't say he was the best at his security job, but he and Tooru held one of the highest success rates when it came to catching impostors and keeping their crewmates safe. He'd be lying if he also wasn't getting frustrated at each dead end they hit, and the growing discomfort at the back of his mind wasn't helping to quell this frustration.

Fumikage checked his wrist communicator and clicked his tongue in irritation. He still had a few more tasks to complete and he was nowhere near any of them. He gave a quick order to Dark Shadow as he made his way towards one of the corners of the ship. "Dark Shadow, I'm going to need you to work double time with me to get these tasks done before another death occurs."

"Roger that!"

As Fumikage ran through the hallways, he noticed a few lights flicker. He ground his teeth together harder and harder as his head throbbed at each flicker. "Not again," he growled through gritted teeth.

"Careful, Tokoyami-kun!" Tooru's voice came through his earpiece again.

"Someone's tinkering with the lights again!"

"Dark Shadow!"

Dark Shadow flittered around nervously before shooting on ahead. When the lights finally shut off completely, Fumikage leaned bodily against the wall. He felt a small tug at his chest, a telltale sign that Dark Shadow had hit its maximum reach. If he was right about his current location, Dark Shadow should be able to reach Electrical with no trouble. Fumikage clutched his head as the pounding seemed to get worse. As he slid to the ground, he clenched his eyes shut in a poor attempt to lessen the pain. Even in the darkness, the boy could feel his vision going in and out of focus.

As he finally slipped into unconsciousness, Fumikage felt a comforting warmth blanket him in the darkness. Even with the pounding headache he was currently experiencing, it felt comfortable and... familiar. If the boy had still been conscious, he would've heard Tooru walk by with Dark Shadow. He

would've heard her soft giggle as she stroked Dark Shadow affectionately, the dark figure letting out soft chirps at her ministrations.

"Sorry, Tokoyami-kun, you'll thank us later..."

To say Fumikage regained consciousness would only be half correct. After being enveloped in that familiar darkness, he felt the pain start to die down. He opened his eyes and stood up, but he didn't feel all there. He was aware he was in his body, but it felt like somebody else was in control; almost like he was looking through the eyes of someone else. Even in pitch-black darkness, Fumikage didn't feel afraid.

"I've been here before," he murmured. His eyes widened at the realization. He needed to find his partner. "Dark Shadow?"

No response. He and Dark Shadow were one and the same. There was *always* an answer to his call.

"Dark Shadow?" He tried again, voice pitched with more urgency.

As if summoned by Fumikage's growing worry, bright yellow eyes appeared in the surrounding darkness, ethereal body taking over the entire space they were in. "I'm here, Fumikage."

For the first time in a long while, Fumikage felt fear. He took a hesitant step back. Dark Shadow never encompassed an area this large before. As he tried to see through the darkness, he voiced his concerns. "Dark Shadow, where are we?"

His partner looked unusually distressed as it avoided meeting his gaze. Letting out a small whine, Dark Shadow spoke quietly. "I guess you were gonna find out eventually..." It wrung its shadowy limbs together nervously. "Well... the easiest explanation would be... you."

Fumikage narrowed his eyes. "Me?"

"Yeah... you. Or at least, your subconscious."

"What?!" Fumikage exclaimed incredulously. Even if he was loath to hear Dark Shadow's answer, he continued to press. "Dark Shadow, explain."

"Ohhh..." Dark Shadow despaired before nodding. "This was why our teamwork with Hagakure worked so well, but..." Dark Shadow's glowing eyes closed for a moment before he opened them again and...

Fumikage felt his stomach drop. He could barely swallow the lump in his throat as he looked at the scene Dark Shadow was showing him.

No.

No.

"NO!"

As Fumikage's mind screamed at him to regain control, he felt his conscious being thrust forward as Dark Shadow released him from its control. The lights were thankfully still off, but Fumikage no longer felt the discomfort from before. He felt... empty; even though he was sitting on top of a still-warm body with his hand still thrust deep into its chest, a thick coating of blood covering his hand as he slowly pulled it out.

With how distressed he was a few seconds prior, Fumikage was curiously surprised at how calmly he was taking the death of another crewmate; especially one he himself had supposedly just killed with the help of Dark Shadow.

He knew full well that his control over Dark Shadow wavered on the onset of darkness, but he trusted his partner enough that even with this lowered level of control, it'd still keep his best interests in mind. As Fumikage stared at the blood on his hand, he realized the ship he trained on was never part of handling security at all. It was just a facade to facilitate the killing of other crewmates. The job he once thought he had was all a lie. A lie that took advantage of the fact that his body housed two souls.

Closing his eyes, Fumikage focused on the sound of his heartbeat to calm himself as he allowed the darkness to slowly consume him. Senses heightened, he heard the soft giggle of Tooru as she moved through the vents; no doubt another kill under her belt and on her way to secure another when the time was right. That left two more crewmates to kill before their mission – their *real* mission, Fumikage corrected himself – was complete.

Before this mission, Fumikage would say that he still somewhat feared the darkness since it came with a partner he couldn't fully control. As he sat in the dark trying to come to terms with this darkness inside him, the teen realized there was truly nothing to fear. The darkness, after all, was his friend. Always had been. It was what brought him and Dark Shadow together in the first place. Fumikage chuckled softly at the irony. The one thing he was missing. The one thing that was causing the dissonance in his mind. The answer was so... simple.

Accept the darkness.

As he ran from the scene of the crime to create and secure a solid alibi, Fumikage could wholeheartedly say that he did. After all, a little darkness never hurt anybody...

Right?



IT CAME FROM POLUS

By LeftiesAreHotter

"I don't get it," Toga says in a small voice, "Kurogiri should be back by now."

She and the rest of her crew turn to their boss Shigaraki and await his orders. He seems to be thinking for a bit, weighing in on the risks of retrieving their comrade. He comes to a decision.

"Everyone suit up. We're going out there," he orders.

The Skeld powers down. Shigaraki activates a wall of old exploration suits from various decades and lifeforms. No two suits are alike, making identification easier. Shigaraki claims the white one. Giran and Twice don the blander brown and black respectively. The others are a bit more flamboyant. Spinner and Compress are stuck with lime and orange. Magne is one of the few tall enough for the classic red. Likewise, Toga is the only one small enough to fit the bright pink suit. Dabi, being ever-so-affectionately dubbed an impostor, simply changes his appearance to incorporate a blue uniform.

Suit vitals read the foreign environment. It's somewhat habitable.

Temperatures are low and the readings confirm the precipitation to be snow. If Kurogiri is still out there, he should be easy to retrieve. He should still be alive.

The team fans out. Spinner and Shigaraki head East. Others individually head South. Toga and Dabi are the only other team and they choose to scour the West side.

They certainly are a ragtag bunch of alien species, but they seem to get along just fine. Their biggest concern is Dabi. Though he seems docile enough, his particular race happens to be an opportunistic and carnivorous feeder. He leaves most of his past a mystery, but he is transparent about his dining experiences. He turned a whole crew once into an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Maybe Toga reminds him of his former brood. Whatever it may be, it seems this impostor has adopted her much like a stray cat adopts a family.

"I'm going to go check out the Electric Systems," she announces, skipping down the dimly lit hall and to the left.

"Whatever, just don't go too far," Dabi snorts. Something is bothering him, but he isn't quite sure what. He doesn't catch anything in his sight, but he can't shake the feeling of being watched.

The doors suddenly shut behind Toga, cutting Dabi off on the other side. No matter how much prying one did on either side, the doors refused to give.

"Dabi!"

"Hold on, Toga. I'll figure this out. Just stay calm, okay?" Dabi assures her.

It's all but reassuring. Toga takes a few deep breaths to steady her nerves. It doesn't last. Beyond the fence, she hears rustling coming from a dark pit in the ground. She whimpers, backing herself into the door. Toga jumps out of her skin when it slides open. For a brief moment, she swears something was looking at her.

Once Dabi is sure she's okay, he ushers to the sounds of commotion caused by the others. It isn't clear to them at first what the others are so anxious about until they happen upon it themselves. The tattered shreds of a violet suit blow in the snowy wind by their feet. The ground is stained with blood. Dabi stops Toga in her tracks. He can barely see it himself, but he knows that it's Kurogiri's limbs strewn before the crew.

Magne and Twice are the first to greet them, thankful they are alive. Others seem hesitant to approach.

"What happened?" Toga asks.

Giran sighs. "Someone or something killed him."

"But who could have done such a thing? Kurogiri was nice to us! He didn't deserve this!" She shakes her head in disbelief.

"Maybe we should consider the only person here who is capable of doing such a thing." Shigaraki shoots Dabi an accusatory look.

"It wasn't me," Dabi refutes.

"I know those bite marks when I see them. An impostor got him plain as day. Or are you saying you wouldn't do something that's programmed into your nature?" Shigaraki snaps.

"Listen here, *leader*. I don't have to discuss the importance of nature versus nurture. But if nature is what you want, nature is what you're about to get," he hisses. Dabi takes a few angry steps toward him, all the while the seams of his suit distort. They pull away to reveal gnarly, jagged teeth.

Magne and Twice intervene and do their best to talk him down, but he isn't hearing it. Tensions flare and voices rise as the crew begins to fall apart. Fingers begin pointing in all directions. Toga shakes her head. It's all too loud and it's driving her nuts.

She seizes the opportunity to state, "It wasn't him."

"Huh?"

"Dabi was with me the entire time! I got stuck in the electrical room and he got me out! He stayed on the other end of that door the whole time!" Toga snaps.

Silence.

They have no reason to doubt Toga and in a situation like this, they can't afford it. There is something out there. Another monster. Another impostor. If there is any hope of survival, they need to take it out before it takes them out. They need to act fast.

"Here's the deal," Giran pipes up, "We need to broadcast a message to warn others to stay away, corral this thing, then kill it."

There is no argument and all agree. With that, they split up into two groups. Giran, Magne, Compress, and Twice are to explore the administrative rooms for any signs of the impostor or helpful material to use against it. Shigaraki, Spinner, Toga, and Dabi will start at the boiler room and meet up at the laboratory entrance. Shigaraki still doesn't trust Dabi, nor Toga now for that matter. For all he knows, Toga could be one of them too.

Meanwhile, the others finally find the breakthrough they have been looking for.

"Says here the previous crew called them Geten. They don't have a name and apparently this thing doesn't like to talk much," Magne spoke out.

"Does it say what happened to the previous crew after it was logged?"

Magne shakes her head. Vitals of the previous crew logged in the database went dark ages ago. They assume the worst.

"I'll go find the others and tell them! Don't let me be eaten!" Twice begs before zipping out of the room. Compress follows to ensure his safety.

Magne nearly has a heart attack when she sees Shigaraki, Toga, and Dabi appear. "What are you guys doing here? The boys just left to go find you."

"Spinner is outside tinkering with some receivers," Shigaraki states.

"What do you got?"

Magne goes on to explain the ill fate of the previous crew. Interrupting is a faint buzz from their built-in walkies— Spinner must have fixed the communication hubs. Giran is coming through a bit clearer now, insisting they reconvene at the laboratory. He says he found a retractable bridge hanging over a pit of lava. If they remove the floor panel, they can lead the impostor to certain death. The new bunch agree to scout it out and head over together. All they can do now is wait for decontamination to complete.

The decontamination chamber finishes depressurizing, leaving Giran standing very uneasy. The doors to the outside world fight the high winds to open. Slowly but surely, they do.

The crew is relieved to see him emerging from within the abandoned sectors. But relief turns to fear when they are met with a pair of glowing eyes behind him.

Before they can react, Giran is snatched by the ankles and thrown onto his stomach. Whatever has him tries to drag him back inside. Giran grips the doors as his only saving grace.

"Giran!"

"Hang on, we got you!"

Giran is a tough guy. Never before had they heard such pained screams coming from him.

Magne and Shigaraki leap into action. They cling to an arm on either side and begin playing a sick game of tug-o-war. Whatever this thing is, they're stronger than any alien the crew's ever known. Toga and Dabi join in and break even.

"Just let go!" Giran begs of them.

Bewildered, they argue back and insist he stays with them. Has he no will to live? He lets out another agonizing cry as something in the abyss snaps. Dabi instinctively knows exactly what it is and releases him.

That thing is eating him alive.

Dabi has to act fast if he wants to save the others. Toga is the easiest to pry off, but she doesn't back off without kicking and swinging.

"Enough!" he snaps. "Unless you want to die too, let him go!"

"Are you mad? I'm not quitting on him unlike-" Shigaraki can't finish his phrase. His eyes lock onto Giran's. They're nearly lifeless, but he can read the pleading look in them. Dabi is right. Giran has accepted his ill fate.

Shigaraki can't begin to apologize when his and Magne's grip loosen, plunging Giran into the darkness that awaited him.

"We need to go! This 'Geten' or whatever is on to us and we need to get them before they get us!" The sense of urgency in Dabi's tone gets them moving again.

In an effort to slow Geten down, Dabi reaches into the wall's panelling and activates an emergency shutdown of the doors leading into the laboratory. Frustrated snarls can be heard from inside. Whatever he did, it seems to have worked.

Stunned, Shigaraki asks, "How did you do that?"

Dabi shrugs. "I couldn't even tell you."

"Well do it again!"

He complies. Dabi deactivates every door he can, effectively trapping the other impostor. But this also traps the crew as well. Tunneling under the facility, he leaves them to fulfill his own role in this plan of attack.

Magne, Toga, and Shigaraki are sealed off in communications. Handy with technology, Shigaraki pulls up schematics and security systems. He can see everything.

The computer buzzes each time a new preventative measure is added. One strikes him as odd. The door to communications reopens.

"What the hell's going on?"

Magne has already put herself in front of Toga protectively. Shigaraki damn near jumps out of the chair to find Geten standing in the doorway. He swears under his breath as he scrambles to reactivate the systems. The doors begin to shut in time to catch Geten forcing their way through. Clawing at the ground, they drag themselves closer and closer to their next meal.

"Hey! Over here, you ugly bastard!"

Shigaraki's eyes widen in fear. That's Spinner's voice. "Spinner, don't!"

Geten weasels their way out. They give up the chase in pursuit of an easier target.

Spinner shouts before taking off. "Remember the plan! Head to the bridge!"

Now's their chance. Shigaraki leads the girls out of communications and they make a mad dash for the door to the office. Nervous hands fumble to open it and he shoos them inside. Magne scans into the decontamination chamber which Shigaraki enters by the skin of his teeth. They rush past the specimen room toward the other laboratory tunnel.

Skidding to a halt on the other end is Geten. Their plan of herding them worked, but perhaps a little too well. It's now a race to the grated flooring of the thermal vent. Magne charges in first, heaving the bars upward. Geten lunges for the makeshift shield to no avail. But that doesn't stop them there. Their teeth scrape against the metal, threatening to snag on Magne's suit.

"Go!"

Shigaraki slides under and helps Toga onto the bridge. The heat is almost unbearable. Magne joins them, cradling a bleeding arm. She assures them she's fine and they must continue. Compress, Spinner, and Twice are on the other end of the small bridge waiting for them, and more importantly, waiting for their signal.

Toga begins her nervous tightrope of a walk across to them. Magne assures her she is right behind. She can't freeze up now. Not over a little molten rock just under her feet. She leaps into Twice's arms and thus leaps into safety. Magne's next.

Not a moment too soon. Geten scrambles through the open floor. They hesitate, seeming unsure of the danger below. But the opportunity to kill Shigaraki must be too good to pass up because every step Shigaraki takes backwards, Geten takes two steps toward him.

He has them right where he wants them.

Shigaraki waves an arm just as Geten charges, signaling for the crew to retract the bridge. With the press of a button, the bridge jolts back. Shigaraki himself nearly falls in when hands reach out and pull him back.

Geten has severely miscalculated. Their torso hits the retracting plates hard and they slip out of sight. Shrieking yelps cease.

Relief washes over the crew. They did it. They are safe once more and they can return to the Skeld knowing that monster will not follow.

It's wishful thinking.

Gloved hands dig into the edge of the bridge. Geten is hauling themselves up with their legs scrambling for footing. Their plan has failed.

Shigaraki gets the crew to form a protective circle around Toga and Magne. They backpedal in unison away from the monster. This is it. They're going to eat them all. They've won.

Geten crouches, that horrifying split in their stomach revealing jagged and bloody teeth ready for the kill.

But no one else will be killed today.

Dabi must've been lurking in a nearby tunnel. With a running start, he pounces on Geten. The impact sends the impostor careening over the edge. They attempt to drag him down with them, but a swift kick to the face seals their fiery fate.

The crew rushes in to save their struggling friend. Spinner and Twice hoist him up and onto his feet. They dust him off, thankful that he is okay. They owe their very lives to him and regret ever mistrusting him.

"I'm sorry I ever doubted you," Shigaraki apologizes.

Dabi scoffs. "Don't flatter yourself. I would've done the same even if I didn't know you would taste rancid."

"Watch it," Shigaraki warns. Recognizing the crew expects orders from him now, he says, "I think we should gather some supplies and be on our way."

"Actually," Dabi interjects, "I think I might chill here. Y'know, in case anything else turns up."

"But Dabi!" Toga starts, but she knows his mind is made up.

"If that's what you want, we can't make you come with us."

He nods. "Nothing saying you guys can't come back. Think of this place as a new home base."

Toga runs up and hugs him. "You better come say goodbye!"

"Yeah, yeah. I will," he says, patting her head.

The following morning, they finish loading the last of the essentials.

"Toga, let's go." Shigaraki signals for her at the Skeld's entrance.

"But he's supposed to say goodbye!" Toga whines.

"I know, hun. But we gotta go." Magne frowns and pats her back, ushering her into the Skeld.

She glances back one last time before conceding. Disappointed, Toga hops on board. She buckles herself in near the bay window and brings her knees to her chest. Twice offers her a tissue, but she shakes her head and declines.

The Skeld begins to rise into the atmosphere when something catches Twice's eye on the ground below. Not something, someone.

"Toga! Look!"

She does a double-take at the window. There, by the landing pad, is Dabi. He waves to them and it has Toga grinning ear to ear. She waves back, shouting her goodbyes as if he can hear her.

Message received.



JUST THE TWO OF US

By Paperficwriter

Polus is already cold enough. It's hard to tell if it's where the best of the best go because they are tough enough to make it in the freezing temperatures on the planet, or if it's where the most difficult or least desired are sent to die. After all, that's what HQ tells you in the paperwork: agreeing to go to Polus means that you accept there is a markedly higher chance that you will not leave the research base.

They don't come out and say that it's because most people wind up dead, but it's not a secret, either.

It's a fact Aizawa is trying to come to terms with as he stands around the table in the meeting room with the other nine researchers, the crew that came here together some several months ago. When he came here with Toshinori and Midnight, they had agreed they would be there for one another. They trained together at the academy, graduated together, and with all other positions filled, they went to Polus together. Every week, they telecalled with their old friend Yamada who had made it on the Skeld.

And now...

"You should have looked for the body." Sir Nighteye's voice twists in Aizawa's gut. "Now we have no idea where it happened."

Aizawa glances over at Toshinori's face. He's pale, normally bright blue eyes dimmed considerably as they stare at the table, now and then flickering to the empty chair beside him. What must he look like?

Gang Orca seems to loom over Nighteye's thin form, though if the Research Director is intimidated, he's not showing it. "When I saw her vitals and knew that everyone was spread out, I came here. I wasn't going to risk losing another of the crew."

"You mean you weren't going to put yourself on the line." The humanoid cetacean seems like he's going to spit a rebuttal, but Nighteye continues, "Does anyone else have any suspicions they would care to share?"

Aizawa studies them all, and none of them will return his gaze. They know what Midnight meant to him and to Toshinori. Hound Dog, Vlad, Kamui, Manual and Joke all stay silent, shaking their heads. He wishes that he could see

something, anything, that would give him a clue that they might have had something to do with it.

Nothing.

The clock above the table shows each second that passes, approaching the bright red zero. It's the failsafe built into Polus base: "the crew must remain focused on keeping workflows moving at all times, even in the face of tragedy. To provide an incentive for resolution, all crewmates will be removed from the meeting space at the end of the countdown."

"Then we continue our work. Keep up with your tasks. Report anything suspicious."

Everyone presses the button in front of their shielded stations to agree.

Toshinori hesitates, and Aizawa reaches over, touching his arm. "Come on. There's nothing else we can do."

Although he can't see the result on his miniscreen, he can feel Toshinori's hand rise and then fall.

Aizawa stays with him after that. They are quiet as they move together, shrouded in the round, inflated protective gear that carries them around the base. As he scans his badge into the system, the slot beeps in protest. Too fast.

"She hated doing this," he says, glancing over where Toshinori is standing motionless. "It always took her so many tries."

"It was infuriating," Toshinori agrees. His voice is quiet. Strained. "She was impatient. Always trying to get everything done quickly."

"Yamada is going to be devastated."

Toshinori nods once. "You should tell him."

"We'll tell him together." This time, Aizawa leaves it face down long enough to be accepted. "Okay. I have to head up to the lab. We should stay together."

Aizawa leads the way, exiting the office and walking north. He passes by Manual and Hound Dog working on the nodes out on the snowy expanse. He waves to them, and glances back when he sees Toshinori pause.

"You okay?" he asks.

His whole body shivers for a moment, jerks like he's surprised. "Yes. Sorry, I was...thinking."

Aizawa turns away.

When he opens the door to the lab and walks inside, the temperature gauge is just ahead. As he stands in front of it, suddenly all the lights around him go out. His auxiliary suit lights turn on, only illuminating the space at his feet. "Shit...okay, let's get to electrical and get this fixed."

Silence.

"Toshinori?"

There isn't even the fall of footsteps.

"Yagi!" This time, Aizawa's voice is higher. No. He will not lose him too.

He takes off at a run, and he keeps calling his name. There are other footsteps, other voices, but none of them are Toshinori's, *none of them*. The door to Electrical is locked, and someone keeps flipping the switches just as he does. It's Vlad, from the noise he makes when Toshinori shoves him out of the way.

When he comes around to where he knows the wire box is, something hits his foot. He trips and falls hard on the floor. Whatever it is is soft. It rolls a little when he falls on it.

His light hits Manual's face through his broken visor. Vacant eyes stare at him. Blood is on his mouth. It's on the rest of him too, and it's puddling underneath, and it's sticking to Aizawa's black suit in an oily sheen.

The lights come on. Toshinori and Hound Dog stare down at him just as he hits the button on his suit, and the alarm begins to blare.

"This is completely unprecedented and cannot stand." Nighteye isn't sitting this time. No one is. They all stand around the table, breathing hard. Aizawa's body is reacting in kind; anxiety is causing a sweat to build at every crevice of his body. "I want names, Aizawa. You reported the incident."

"Toshinori was with me the entire time. We've been together all afternoon."

Nighteye cuts his eyes at Toshinori, though he isn't quick to accuse as he should be. Aizawa knows that Nighteye hand-picked Toshinori's application for this job, given his aptitude and shining record. "Who else."

"Hound Dog. And I saw him with Manual not long before—"

The sound that Hound Dog makes is snarling and furious. His kind already has difficulty speaking in any common language, and when emotions are high, it's even harder. "...You!! *Grrrgghhh on top of him!!*"

Vlad speaks up, then. "I would have seen it happen. I came in with him as soon as Aizawa got in the door."

"Where were you, Kamui?" Nighteye interjects.

"At the monitor tree."

"Again?" Joke smirks. "You're obsessed with that place. There's no way you have tasks there every single time. Sure you're not sneaking into that hole in the corner?"

Even behind the mask Kamui has always worn to protect his skin from the elements, it is obvious how he feels about the accusation. "I didn't see you around either, Joke!"

There's so much noise that Aizawa can't make everything out. Everyone is talking— no, yelling, pointing fingers, and Nighteye says something about the time and—

Suddenly, Aizawa is out of the meeting room. They all are. The transport system has opened under all of them, depositing them outside of the reconciliation chamber.

It's back to work for them all.

"I've had some jobs that have made me want to drop dead, but this is ridiculous."

Aizawa cuts his eyes at Joke. The reactor alarm is blaring in his ear, over and over, and it's beyond grating as it is. "Is that supposed to be funny?" His gaze softens only a bit when he can see that she's not smiling as much as she normally does.

"It's supposed to help me cope with the fact that two people have died in less than one shift."

He nods. His hand is starting to ache after sending Toshinori to the other platform, but he knows that it takes some time for him to climb up. The counter shows there is time though. Finally, the light changes, and the repetitive sound fades into a fuzzy nothingness.

Joke puts her hand on his shoulder. "Do you want to talk?"

"Not really."

"Do you want to do something else?" She strikes an almost over-exaggerated 'sexy' pose, and admittedly it does make Aizawa laugh.

"Give it up."

"And give up a hot guy like you who could warm me up on a frozen planet? Never!"

When they both turn, Joke gasps. Toshinori stands not six feet away from them, breathing hard, his small eyes bright in his dark face. The datapad in his hand is shaking just a little bit, and when Aizawa walks up to him on the catwalk, it feels like he's looking past him. At Joke? At something else?

"Thanks for getting the reactor," he says, hoping that the casual tone will bring him out of it. "Ready to move on?"

He jerks when he touches him, like it's the first time he's noticed him. Thin lips on his gaunt face move, but Aizawa can't make out what he says, but it doesn't matter. He probably wouldn't be able to hear it as the system honks with yet another casualty report.

Joke lets out a choked laugh. "Maybe third time's the charm!"

It's chaos. Pure and simple. There would be blood, if not for the meeting room's security. Anytime Aizawa tries to speak, Gang Orca is yelling at Nighteye, screaming at him, and Hound Dog is howling, growling, frothing. Kamui's seat sits empty.

"Everyone, please, let people talk—!" Vlad is yelling.

Nighteye's voice is loud over the din, unmoved. "I saw him in security. The evidence between this incident and the last one is enough. We can't risk another casualty."

Aizawa doesn't think he has ever seen Orca's teeth look so big, or his eyes so red. "You didn't see Hound Dog touch anyone! And what were you doing in security when you should have been working?!"

"Someone needed to be keeping an eye on what's going on, since we keep losing our crew."

Hound Dog is too wild to explain his whereabouts. Aizawa can see the hands of the others moving, even Joke. Even... "Toshinori, don't."

Toshinori just shakes his head. "It's what we have to do."

Orca rounds on them. "We don't! Stop!"

"Sorry, baby," Joke says to Aizawa.

"Please."

The screen comes up with the data. Four votes against Hound Dog. One abstaining. Two against Nighteye.

The protocol is quick. One moment, Hound Dog is standing there. The next, the floor beneath him swallows him up. The screen changes to the lava pit outside. There's no sound, but there doesn't have to be. They all watch. They watch as his body burns and sinks into nothing, a clawed hand grasping at air, muzzle open in a scream that Aizawa is sure he can hear.

Hound Dog has been ejected.

Aizawa doesn't sleep. He tries once to contact Yamada on the Skeld, but he doesn't answer, which is...strange. Every time he's almost asleep, he can hear the door opening to the chute that goes to the lava. He can see Hound Dog struggling, like he's drowning when his body is actually falling apart.

The next day, he watches Gang Orca leave the quarters following close behind Nighteye, and Joke grabs Aizawa's arm. She unintentionally knocks Toshinori, but he quickly rights himself even though she doesn't notice, or if she does, she doesn't respond. "Hey. Going my way?"

Her voice comes out higher. Tighter.

"We should stay in groups," Toshinori says. "Gang Orca and Nighteye are together. You should go with Vlad."

"Nah, I'm good. Three's company, right?"

"But—"

Aizawa jerks back when her hand tightens painfully on his arm, as she twists to glare at Toshinori. "If you care so fucking much, you go with Vlad. I know it's not Shouta. So. I'm staying. Deal with it."

They don't talk much after that. At the same time, though, Aizawa can't help but be calm because through several crises - communication issues, the electricity, even twice the reactor threatens to fail - there are no reports coming in. Even if the cold is bitter and biting, Aizawa feels like he can breathe.

They even pass Vlad and exchange waves, and the trio walk down to the lab together. "Look at how much work you get done when you're not busy with a body count," Joke says with a grin.

"Grim."

"Yeah, well. Gotta laugh or you'll cry, right?" As she finishes with the samples, Joke turns to Toshinori. "What's next for you, Meat and Bones?"

After a moment, he says, "I have to go to O2."

"You sure?" she teases. Toshinori doesn't respond.

As Toshinori disappears around the corner of the hallway, Aizawa glances up toward security. It occurs to him then that as they have been walking around, he's never seen any of the red lights blinking, a sure sign that Nighteye had his eye on them. He listens. There's no sound.

Glancing back at Joke standing at the garbage chute, he makes his way up, opening the door.

The carnage immediately fills his vision with red. Nighteye, all but bent in half and obscured partially by the desk splattered with blood, his signature glasses shattered on the keys. Behind him, Gang Orca, his black and white flesh sticky with gore where his suit has been torn open. He's been mostly disemboweled.

"Hrk!"

Aizawa spins around in place, and it takes too much precious time to realize what he's seeing. It's Toshinori, but it's *not Toshinori*. The creature standing there is almost bursting out of his protective suit, all muscles, massive and towering. It's every horror monster that Aizawa could imagine that has been injected into the body of his friend.

In the crook of one massive arm is Joke's head, and he watches as the muscles flex, a muted snap making her go limp before falling to the floor.

"No...no..."

Hit the button. Hit the fucking report button. Do it!

"No..."

There's a strange noise as the huge muscular man falls forward, a sound like gas escaping, and he deflates back into that same man Aizawa has known for so very, very long. Long enough that his knees still give out to catch him when he stumbles forward. "Shouta..."

"Toshinori...what happened?" His voice turns desperate, and he shakes his slight form. "When did this...*what the fuck happened?!*"

"I thought...I could control it, but...I can't...I can't stay like this for long." Toshinori coughs, and behind the visor blood drips back onto his face. Even now, like this, Aizawa can feel his body clenching, like there is something on the other side of Toshinori's skin trying to burst out.

Toshinori says something. He can't make it out.

"*Stop me. Please.*" Toshinori's dark eyes shine wet with tears. "Before I kill you too."

"Don't. We can—"

There are noises coming from down the hall. Vlad? Yes. Who else could it be, now? Now that there's no one left?

If he could have one wish, it would be for it to be Midnight. Or Yamada. Or the real Toshinori, not the straining shell of him in his arms. Someone to show him that this nightmare is just that: an illusion. Something to scare him at night in his bunk and not a reality that he alone has to deal with.

The button is right there on his thigh.

He closes his eyes and drops his hand.

NESTY
GUTS



MINE EYES DECEIVE

By Chewy

Uraraka lets out a sigh, swiping a hand across her forehead as she steadies her fingers to bring the wires together once again. "If somebody calls another useless meeting before I finish this task, I swear," she mutters under her breath, carefully extricating the blue wire from underneath the red.

She's nearly finished her task, with just the yellow wire left to solder when she freezes, feeling a chill run down her spine. Without even looking, she can feel the eerie presence of what can only be an impostor breathing down her neck and she turns slowly, ever so slowly to look behind her when—

"Need a hand?"

"Jesus Christ, Iida!" Uraraka cries out, jumping backward and accidentally bumping an elbow into her wires. "Dang it," she sighs, untangling her arm to find that she's ruined all her hard work of the past few minutes.

"Sorry, sorry," Iida apologizes with a smile, reaching out to help her to her feet. "I really didn't mean to startle you."

"Yeah, yeah," she answers, staring forlornly at the mess of wires she'll have to fix again. "You need to be more careful about sneaking up on people like that," she scolds, turning to face him. "People might think you're an impostor or something!"

The smile drops from Iida's face at that, and Uraraka finds herself taking a hesitant step back.

"Not that I think you are, or anything," she continues with a laugh. When Iida doesn't respond, she awkwardly waves her hands in the air, stepping forward to take the lead. "Why don't we go ahead and take our lunch break now? I don't know about you but I'm starving."

Iida seems to relax at the mention of food, tilting his head back to the switch panel. "You go on ahead, I just need to finish up here first. I'll meet you in the cafeteria."

Uraraka hesitates, squinting back at Iida before turning away with a shrug. "Okay, I'll see you!"

Jirou stifles a yawn, staring blearily at the security cameras. There's been no suspicious movement from any of the impostors for the past few days, and her guard is down as she flips through the cams. It's just the crew going about their daily tasks, hurrying this way and that. Her eyes slowly start to blink closed as the steady hum of the ship lulls her to sleep, and she misses the dark blue streak that passes by the corner of one of the screens.

Another minute of silence passes, and then...

"Shit, what?" Jirou asks, sitting straight up in her seat. The room is still empty, and nothing seems out of the ordinary on her cams so she settles back in her seat. Must have been a draft of air through the vents. She stands to walk over to the vents, warily peering inside to make sure no impostors are lurking on the other side.

"All clear, nothing to fear," Jirou hums to herself when nothing seems particularly amiss, turning back to the computer.

She barely makes it two steps before something dark streaks into the room, filling up her vision.

"Aw, fuck," is all she manages to get out before she slumps over on the floor, blood leaking out of her space suit.

Uraraka turns back to her wires, feeling safer now that she knows Iida is watching her back. Tongue sticking out between her teeth in concentration, she draws the blue wires together for what must be the third time the day, only to groan in frustration as the alarm bells ring.

"Time to head back to the cafeteria then, I guess," she says with a smile turning to face Iida. "Iida? Hello?" she frowns when she turns to find that nobody's there except her in electrical. "Strange, he must have gone ahead of me."

The halls are empty and quiet, lit up by the red glow of the warning lights and she shivers as a chill crawls up her spine. She really hopes this is just a meeting, but it's hard to ever tell until she gets there. Letting out a sigh, she picks up her pace into a jog as she passes through the storage room.

"Uraraka! Over here!" Midoriya's familiar voice calls out and she looks up to see him in his recognizable green suit, waving at her. On one side of him is Todoroki, who stares blankly at the table in front of him, and on the other is Iida, smiling back at her.

"Hey guys, do you know what's happened?" she asks, sliding into a chair on Iida's left. When Midoriya shakes his head no, before falling into another ramble speculating about the possibilities of what could have transpired in the last few hours since their earlier meeting, she leans close to Iida. "Hey, why didn't you wait up for me? I was trusting you to protect me from the impostors, you know," she whispers, nudging his arm.

"Oh, ah, I'm sorry about that," Iida answers sheepishly. He turns to her with a serious face, bowing his head down so low it bonks against the table in front of them. "Ow. Sorry. I was worried there was a serious emergency so I ran ahead," he explains, rubbing at his forehead.

Uraraka laughs, poking the little red spot that's begun to bloom on his skin.

"Hey, don't worry. I was just teasing. But give me a heads up next time, okay?"

"Yeah, okay."

Before they can continue their conversation any further, Kaminari runs into the room and slams his hands down on the table in front of them.

"Which one of you was it? Which one of you traitors killed Jirou?"

At that, everybody freezes for a second before the chaos ensues.

"Hey, wait, are you accusing us of killing our own friend?" Kirishima shouts back, standing upright as his chair topples backwards.

"Wait, Jirou's dead?" Yaoyorozu asks, hand rising to cover her mouth. Beside her, Tsuyu silently reaches into her pocket and hands her a tissue.

"I bet it was Deku! It's always fucking Deku's fault," Bakugou growls, glaring at him from across the table.

"Woah," Todoroki speaks up, holding out a hand. "We were together in medbay. It's not us."

"Well if it isn't you then--"

"Don't accuse me of--"

"Isn't it strange that she--"

"You guys are all being--"

"Hey! Everybody!" Iida's booming voice echoes throughout the cafeteria and finally, everybody quiets down and turns to look at him. "Look, I think that we're getting a little heated right now, but we need to start carefully looking at the facts. Please raise your hand if you have something to say, and let one

person speak at a time. Kaminari, you start with why you called the meeting.” He claps his hands and returns to his seat, taking off his glasses to wipe them anxiously when everybody continues to stare silently back at him.

“Um, yeah, I agree with Iida,” Uraraka speaks up when nobody else says anything. “Kaminari, can you tell us what happened?”

With a shaky sigh, he sits back down in his chair rubbing at his eyes. “I was just coming out of the reactor room, when I heard a thud coming from security. I ran right in and I found... I found...”

“Jirou’s body?” Yaoyorozu whispers.

Kaminari nods. “I... The impostor must have vented, there’s no other way I would have missed them if I literally heard her fall.”

“Was the room empty when you walked in?” Kirishima asks, leaning forward on his elbows.

“Yeah, obviously.”

“But what about cams? You didn’t see anything right outside security?”

“No, of course not, I—” Kaminari pauses then, squinting around the room. “I mean, I don’t think so? I... shit, I don’t know I might have seen a blur in the corner of the screen, but—”

“So you’re saying they might not have vented,” Bakugou cuts in. “Well who was in medbay or electrical? You would have seen him vent.”

“Midoriya and I were in medbay, like I said. Nobody came in before we came to this meeting, and nobody came in through that hallway either,” Todoroki says.

Uraraka timidly raises her hand. “Actually, I was in electrical. Nobody vented there, either.”

“You were alone?” Kaminari asks.

“Me and Iida,” she says, nudging Iida.

“Yes, it was us.”

Kaminari frowns, staring at Iida’s uniform. When Kirishima bumps his shoulder, he sighs and shakes his head. “Then I don’t know how they made it out of the room that fast, but I guess they couldn’t have vented.”

As everybody continues to discuss among themselves who the impostor could possibly be, one by one clearing themselves of suspicion, Uraraka turns to stare at Iida who watches the proceedings silently.

"You were behind me the whole time while I was doing wires, right?" she asks. Their conversation goes unheard behind the chaos of the argument in front of them.

Iida turns to look at her in surprise. "Of course."

"Right, of course."

The meeting continues to drag on with no real evidence to point at anybody in the room, and finally, Bakugou throws his hands up. "Look, I need to get back to weapons. If nobody has anything useful to say, I say we call the meeting."

As uneasy as they all are, they look around at the tired and anxious expressions on each other's faces and nod, standing up slowly. As always, Iida is the first to run out of the room.

"Guys, wait," Uraraka says before anybody else can move. "I... I really don't want to say this but... I'm a little suspicious of Iida."

"I thought you said he was with you the whole time?" Kaminari asks, whirling to face her. "Were you lying to us?"

"Hey," Midoriya steps in, holding out a hand to calm him down. "Let's hear her out first."

"Look," she says, wringing her hands together. "I was focusing on the wires, so I assumed he was behind me, but I don't know. He wasn't in the room when I heard the alarm."

"So it was him! Why didn't you say so?"

"No, wait," she continues, "I actually did see him just a few seconds before, though, so there's really no way he did the kill unless he vented, and I didn't hear the vents. That's why I wasn't sure."

At that, the table falls silent as they look around at one another.

"How about this," Midoriya finally speaks up. "All the past kills, we've suspected the impostor must be venting. That's always been their M.O. They kill fast, and get out fast. I think for now, we need to keep an eye on the vents together, and see if we can catch Iida in the act. I don't want to oust him without hard evidence. Is that okay?"

With no better solution, everybody ends up nodding as Midoriya assigns partners to patrol each vent and they head off in their respective directions.

"Ready?" Uraraka asks Tsuyu and she nods back, linking their arms as they make their way over to the reactor. On the way, Uraraka sees a flash of blue pass by them, and she flinches back, smiling uneasily to Iida as he goes.

They've barely made it to the end of the hallway, though, when the alarms are blaring again and they turn to each other, frowning as they rush back the way they came from.

Iida is there first as usual, waiting in the cafeteria while everybody filters back in. "That was fast," he mutters with a frown.

"Your glasses," Uraraka whispers, pointing at Iida's face. "Where'd they go?"

Iida shakes his head, rubbing at the bridge of his nose. "I dropped them a while ago, but when I went back to find them, they were gone."

Before he can elaborate further, Bakugou stomps in, throwing his gloves down on the table. "Kirishima's dead. I took my eyes off that idiot for *one goddamn second* and he's dead."

"I'm sorry, Kacchan," Midoriya says, reaching out with a hand to comfort him.

"Don't fucking touch me. This is your fault, idiot. If you hadn't come up with that stupid idea to split up and look at the vents when you know we don't have enough cremates on hand to cover every spot—"

"Hey," Todoroki steps in. "Calm down and tell us what happened."

"Went to shields," Bakugou says. "Told the dumbass to wait, went to nav but... barely stepped down the hall when, same as Kaminari, heard the thump. Went back. Found the body."

Uraraka lets out a sigh at that. "So that means Iida's clear."

"What? Me?" Iida sits upright, turning to look back at Uraraka. "What do you mean?"

She turns to him with an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry, I just... Every rock unturned, right?"

Bakugou rolls his eyes. "Clear? Explain."

She turns to look at Tsuyu, who nods back at her. "Tsuyu and I passed him on our way to the reactor. There's no vents that would take him all the way to shields," she explains. Bakugou squints at her but sighs and shrugs anyway.

"Whatever. Don't know who would have killed him anyway."

The table falls silent after that as they look around at one another.

"Well," Todoroki says, directing his stare to Bakugou. "I don't want to say this, but we were all partnered up. Iida's been cleared. The only person unaccounted for is you."

"*What?*" Bakugou hisses, pushing his chair back and pointing his finger at Todoroki's chest. "If anybody, I'd suspect *you*, with how heartless you are at these meetings every *goddamn* time there's been a literal murder on this ship."

"Guys," Midoriya says, standing between the two of them.

"No, don't you fucking say a word, freak. Even if you aren't the impostor, you're just as responsible for his death, too," he continues, turning to shove Midoriya back. "Fucking whatever, just fucking vote. I don't give a shit if you vote me off, it won't change the fact that you're to blame."

Bakugou sits back down, breath heaving as the rest of the room looks down at their laps in silence.

"Everybody," Iida says, inching forward in his seat. "Before we begin to mutiny against each other, I think it would be best to calm down and do as Bakugou said. It doesn't matter at this point, we should just vote before the impostor hurts any more of us."

"Iida's right," Yaoyorozu speaks up, gripping her hand in a fist. "Let's vote."

Silently, they all cast their votes one by one and nod to Iida to present the tally.

Iida sucks in a sharp breath before looking up again. "I'm sorry, but... Bakugou."

"Come on," Todoroki says, standing to guide Bakugou away.

"Don't touch me," he hisses, stomping his way over to the door. "I can do it myself."

Uraraka turns away as he slams down on the button, stepping out onto the other side of the glass.

"Wait, no, this doesn't seem right," Kaminari says, standing and making his way over but it's already too late as the floor opens beneath him and Bakugou is ejected. "Shit. Fuck. And if he wasn't the impostor?"

Iida shakes his head. "Then we need to work faster. Let's get to work."

As people begin to exit the room, Uraraka walks over to catch Iida's elbow.

"Hey, walk with me? I wanted to talk to you."

Iida frowns down at her, but follows along anyway. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," she says, shaking her head with a laugh. "Or, at least, not anymore. I just wanted to apologize," she continues. "For suspecting you. I was wrong."

They turn the corner, walking into admin as Iida steps in closer. "Oh, no. Please, don't apologize."

"But I should, I—"

"Don't apologize," Iida repeats, and Uraraka finds herself backed up into the wall as he approaches with a sinister smile. "Because you were right."

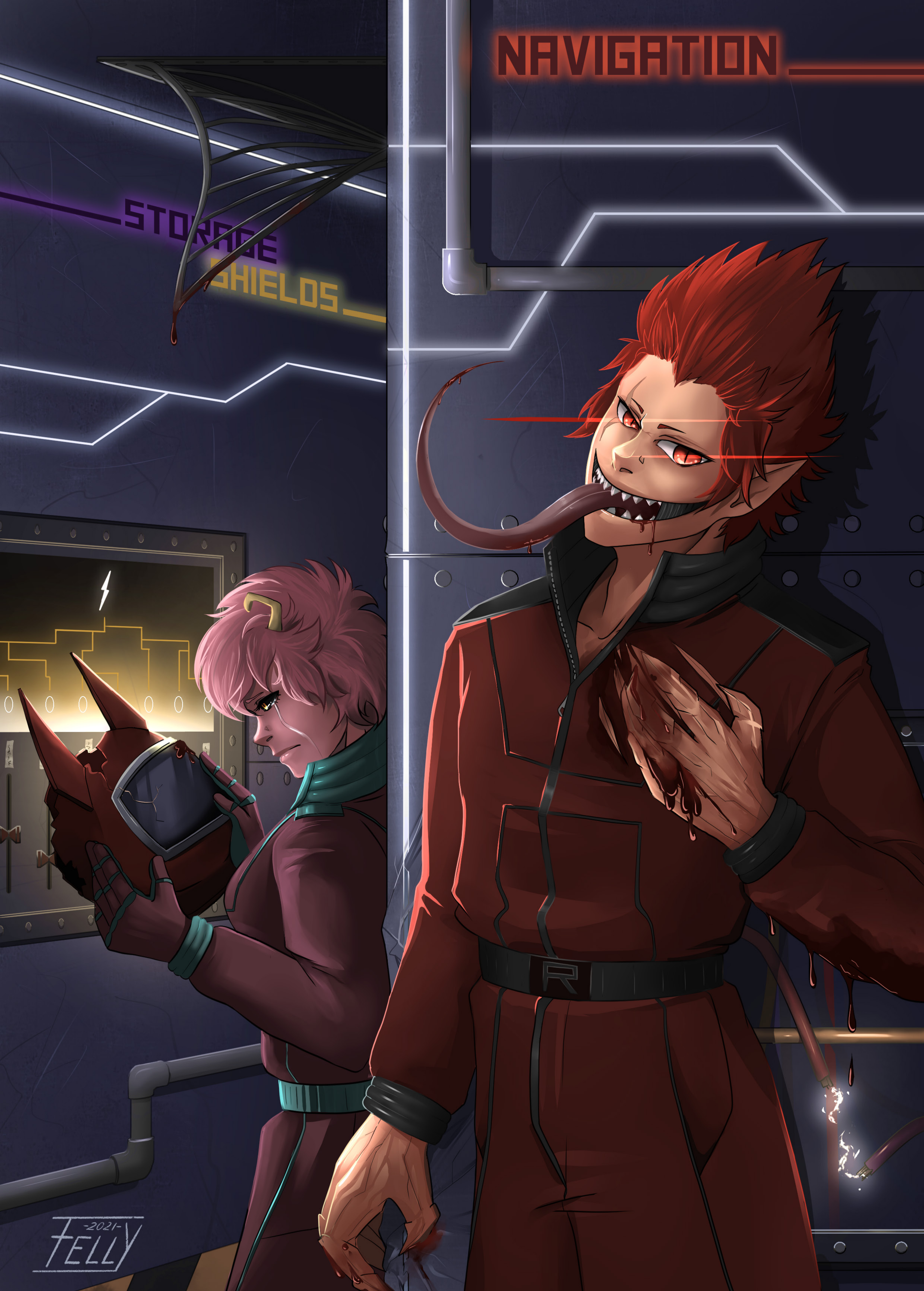
Her voice catches in her throat and she can't even let out a scream as Iida pulls out a knife and slashes her. She falls to the ground, vision going hazy as she looks up to see Iida smiling and turning away, only to freeze.

There, behind him, stand Midoriya, Todoroki, and Kaminari, all lined up to swipe their cards. Just on the table next to them, sits Iida's glasses.

"Shit."

NAVIGATION

STORAGE
SHIELDS



NOSTALGIA

By Pluto

Denki hated that everyone was so uptight about this. Sure, the imposters were a big deal but the stress was not good for them. It felt like they never had *fun* anymore and Denki missed having crew nights where they just laughed and had a good time. Every morning it was wake up, check your tasks, don't die while doing them, this person looks sus—like, seriously, it wouldn't hurt them too, you know, loosen up a bit. Even just one night would do Denki good. Not to mention he was terrible at staying serious, even now, so a little light-hearted fun shouldn't be too bad.

At least, that was his reasoning as he silently snuck up behind Sero, who was struggling to do wires.

It was an innocent little prank, and he trusted Sero not to be the imposter. He was pretty sure he had someone watch him scan. Either way, nothing could stop him now as he slowly reached out his fingers, praying that Sero wouldn't turn around. He couldn't stop the grin that spread across his face as he finally lunged forward. "Gotcha!"

Sero yelped, jumping away from Denki's fingers, somehow getting himself even more entangled within the wires. "Dude! Don't do that!" he snapped, but Denki could hear the breathy chuckle he let out. "Gods, don't you understand the situation?"

"Of course I do," Denki shrugged as he pushed his visor up, "but you know that I can't take things seriously without having some fun around it."

Sero huffed as he watched Denki untangle him. "You're right. Things used to be so different before. I miss it."

"That's what I've been saying! I know that the whole, like, *situation* makes everyone tense, and for very valid reasons, but we can still have fun!"

"What are you suggesting? Game nights again?" Sero asked, finishing up the rest of the wires with Denki's assistance.

"Well, yeah, but I just want things to be less gloomy in general." Denki shrugged, showing that he was down for pretty much anything.

"I mean, I can't speak for the rest of the crew, but you can hang out with me for a bit. I wouldn't mind having you around with your jokes."

Denki grinned, nodding. "Done. Where to now?"

"I'm headed over to Med Bay to do some samples." Denki nodded again, following behind Sero as they make their way through the ship. They don't see very many others, but Denki half expected it. Many people liked to either work alone and far away from others or in large groups. They made it to MedBay safely, and Denki sat at one of the beds as Sero did his task. He dug around in one of the cabinets for a minute before pulling out a roll of bandages. Sero wandered over as the samples were tested to see what he was doing. Denki already had pieces of bandage wrapped around him randomly, chuckling.

"What are you doing?" Sero sighed.

"You know those old Egypt movies?" Denki asked excitedly, standing. "Guess what I am!" He started hobbling around, arms straight out, as he made random groaning noises. Sero cracked up, trying to cover his mouth to stifle it. The action made Denki grin. He was glad his plan worked.

"Wait, wait, lemme make it more realistic," Sero choked out, grabbing the roll off the bed. He went over to Denki, quickly wrapping the bandages over every part of him. Denki tried to stifle his giggles as Sero worked, but it wasn't working that well. "Stop moving!" Sero reprimanded him, but it wasn't in a mean way.

"Sorry, sorry! I'll try, here." Kaminari froze up, even going as far as to hold his breath.

"Breathe, idiot," Sero snorted, and Kaminari sucked in a deep breath. "Do the impression again," Sero encouraged, stepping back.

Pulling what little knowledge he's known about old-timer movies, Denki cleared his throat and put on his best 'mummy rising from the dead' impression. Sero laughed again, which sent Denki's heart soaring. He liked that he could pull such a happy sound from him; he lived for it almost. At some point in his little charade, Denki started to say lines like 'I will eat your brains' all raspy-like.

"Dude, I'm pretty sure that's a zombie, not a mummy," Sero points out.

"Oh," Denki's arms dropped as he realized it too. "Why'd they have to make all these monsters so similar? It's not fair if you ask me."

"I think it was because back then people were just afraid of everything," Sero shrugs.

There was a small noise at the door, and they both froze, looking over.

"Denki what-" a very confused-looking Uraraka said, standing in the doorway, obviously coming in to do some sort of task. She took a minute to process what she was seeing, pointing between the two. "You know what. Don't bother explaining. I don't want to know."

Denki chuckled, embarrassment in the form of blood rush creeping up his face. "Yeah, good choice."

"Let's get those off of you and keep going," Sero suggested, also embarrassed by being caught.

"Oh, before you go," Uraraka said, rushing forward. "Watch me scan so I have you two as an alibi."

They did, not being able to refuse her. The samples were done, Denki free of the bandages, Uraraka imposter checked, and they were on their way to storage to start the garbage task. That one was pretty simple however Sero did watch him closely as he did it, which he could understand. They were quiet as they made their way past Admin and to the cafeteria so that Bakugou, who was currently trying to swipe his card by the looks of it, didn't blow up at them. It was no secret that he was a little hot-headed, especially when he was trying to focus on something.

While they were in the Cafeteria, Sero decided that he was going to walk around to make himself useful. "Scout the area" were the exact words he used, making Denki grin. He loved Sero for his references to their past life. They were similar enough that they got along easily and it made the transition onto the ship that much better for Denki. He looked over when Sero gasped.

"What'd you find?" he asked, following Sero's gaze.

"I thought we threw this out!" Sero practically crowed, digging out the dusty board game box from behind more boxes.

"Is that what I think it is?" Denki gasped, rushing over. "There's no way."

"Ugh, there has to be a way because I'm holding it in my hand right now," Sero said, brushing off the dust. In his hand was one of the crew's favourite games to play before this whole imposter business came up. They thought for sure it had gotten thrown out a long time ago.

"We have to play!" Denki exclaimed, snatching the box from Sero and heading over to one of the tables.

"Won't we get in trouble?"

"Who cares? If we do we'll just put it away," Denki said. Sero seemed to take that as reason enough and helped him set up the game. He never really did question too much, it's what made him Sero.

They got the game set up in no time, and were sitting down to play a round or two. It wasn't like the usual board games back on earth, this one was holographic. You had to live up to the tech if you were going to be on a futuristic space expedition. The objective of the game was simple. Make it around the board, collect as many of your coloured 'artifacts' as you can before you reach the end, and the winner is the one with the most collected. To get the artifacts, you had to land on the square with your colour, and you move forward by a dice roll. It was even more intense if they rewrote the rules a bit and started making bets. This was how they normally played with the crew, as it was originally a game intended for children. Right now, Sero and Denki didn't add anything extra to it, just to feel that sweet nostalgia for a few moments.

Sero scoffed halfway through the game. "I just realized how much they were training us without actually training us. Remember back in school when we'd play this during free time?"

"Yeah, what are you getting on about?" Denki asked, not following his train of thought.

"Well, the whole point of this game is to find artifacts on some alien planet. We were in school to go on missions like that. They were subconsciously prepping us, and we didn't even realize! It's genius, but come on," Sero explained.

"Oh, yeah! And wasn't it the school who created this game in the first place?" Denki asked, collecting one of his artifacts.

"Exactly! I think it was a ploy all along," Sero said.

Denki chuckled at that, being brought back to his high school and college days. Those were some times. They would take every free chance they got to roam the campus. They would spend late nights exploring, breaking into places they definitely shouldn't be that late at night and hanging around that old statue in front of the main building. By the time they were graduating, the professors gave up trying to get them to stop. It didn't matter how many times they were in detention, it didn't stop them.

"What are you two doing in here?" a gruff voice says from behind Denki. He turned to see Bakugou standing a few feet away.

"The old game night board game!" Denki exclaimed, "Come play with us! The round's almost over."

"I'm not playing some boring game, we're trying to survive," Bakugou spat, but he was moving closer anyway. Curiosity always did kill the cat.

"Oh come on, one or two games wouldn't hurt. Besides, if something goes down we have a very valid reason why we weren't the cause," Sero reasoned.

"It still seems dumb," Bakugou muttered, but he sat down beside Denki anyway. They finished their game, and that was when Kirishima and Mina found them.

"Is that the board game we used to play?!" Kirishima asked excitedly, not hesitating before taking a seat beside Sero.

"Yeah! We were just about to start another game, you want to play?"

"I want in on that," Mina squeals, shoving Bakugou over to sit. She always loved this game.

They set everything up to get the game started, and this time added some stakes to it. It wasn't anything too rash, just dessert for the next few weeks, but it added that flare they used to have. With Bakugou playing, there was some yelling and arguments, but if anybody heard they didn't say anything. They made it through a total of three games before it hit Denki.

He realized just how long it had been since the last time he heard their laughter bouncing off the walls, almost reverberating in his head. This warm feeling that he was feeling, that hasn't been around in a long time either. The imposters took a lot from them, some things they hadn't even realized, and it turned their lives upside down. None of them saw this coming, and it changed them all.

That being said, it just gave Denki more reason to cherish it now. Right now, out of all times, he got at least some of the crew to loosen up a bit and forget where they were. Sure, it wouldn't be for long, it never was, but all that mattered was seeing his friends smiling and having a good time. Denki sat there while Sero set up yet another game, watching everyone bicker over who won that last round, and felt something warm swell in his chest that just about brought tears to his eyes. They were having fun, and all because they found some old board game. This moment was nostalgic as anything else, lining up every other time they've played this game together.

Denki liked this. He liked seeing the smiles. He liked that he got to hear their laughs again. He liked that, despite whining about it before, he got to hear Bakugou's pointless complaints. He liked that at that moment they were just the dumb teenagers they used to be.

"Denki, you in?" Sero asked him, gently nudging his shin under the table.

"Yeah," Denki said, shaking his head. "Yeah, I'm in, and I'm gonna win. Sorry to break it to you guys, but you're looking at the next reigning champ."

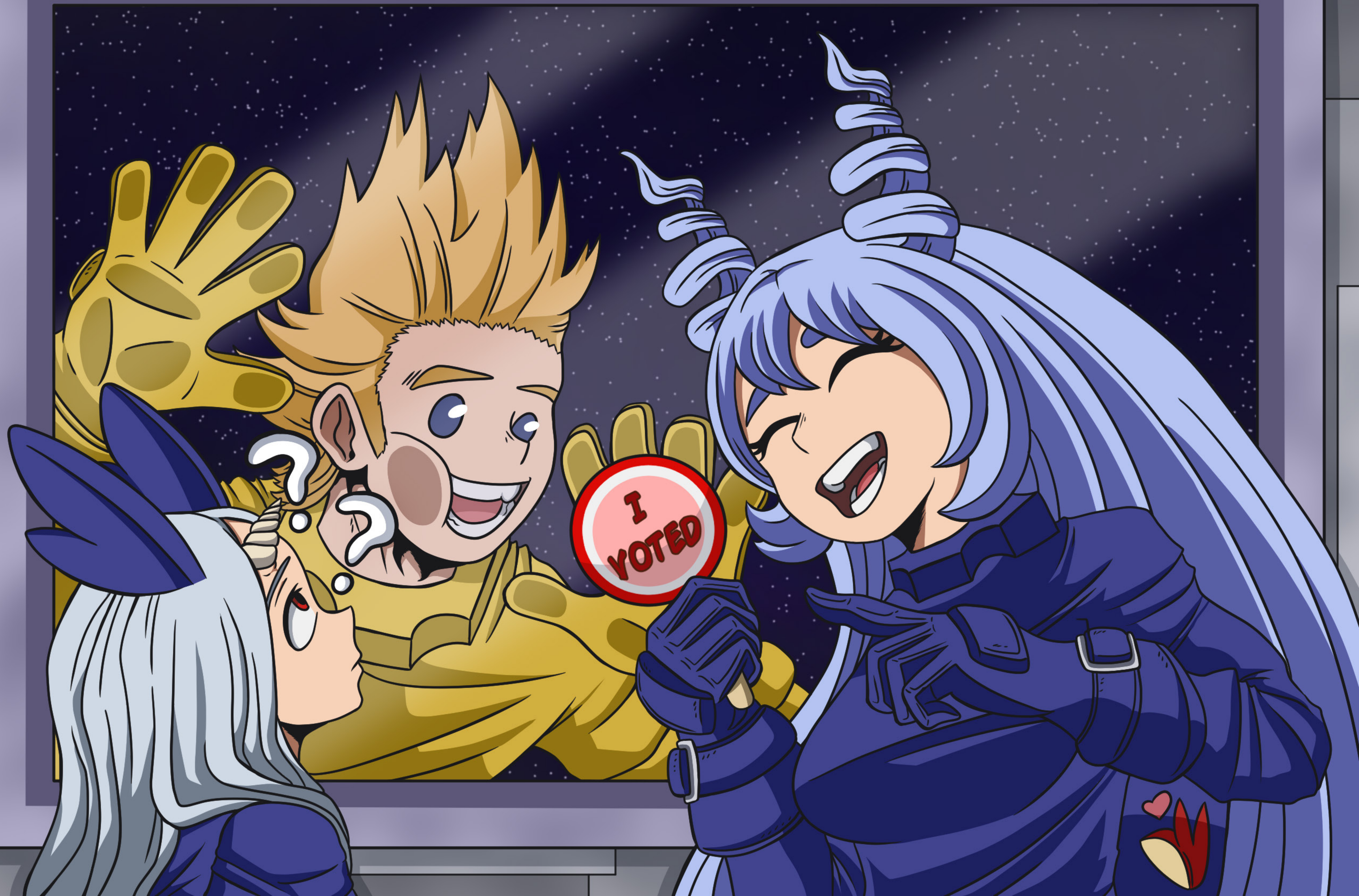
"Ha, in your dreams, dunce face," Bakugou mocked. "You lost every game we played today!"

"Hey, experts gotta start somewhere," Denki grinned.

"Just start, I wanna see if you actually win," Kirishima said, handing Denki the dice. "If you don't, you're cleaning the suits for a week."

"You're on!"

Nostalgia wasn't a common emotion for Denki. But right now, he wished it never went away.



ONE OF US

By Dina S

For all intents and purposes, Dabi was an Imposter. Sure, they had a name—the imposters, that was—but it was long and complicated and no one could be bothered to remember it. ‘Imposter’ was far less of a mouthful than ‘Spatium Interfectorem’.

The species with the peculiar ability to rapidly shift and adapt their forms, and a peculiar thirst for blood. Some said that was wrong; the species wasn’t as bloodthirsty as people said, they were just trying to protect something from other species in the universe. They could shove those opinions up their asses, for all Dabi cared.

Because he knew—oh he *knew*—that’s not the case. Imposters aren’t protecting anything but themselves. Even then, it’s touch and go.

You see, it was near impossible to truly render an imposter dead. Such rapid shapeshifting meant as long as they were expecting it, they could avoid any and all damage an attack does. They got stabbed in the heart? If they hadn’t moved their heart out of harm’s way, they could patch up the hole in a matter of seconds. Ejected from the airlock? That’s fine, they’d adjust their lungs to take in helium or hydrogen, or maybe they’d get rid of their lungs altogether. No sweat.

They didn’t want to protect anything, they wanted blood and chaos.

When he ran away, Dabi changed his form. As an imposter, that was simply natural. But Dabi went against the grain. For.. personal reasons. Black hair dye, black fabric dye. White to black and red to black, sitting examining his scars while he waited for his suit to dry.

And then he had to find an imposter’s ship.

It was surprisingly easy, actually. They weren’t exactly hiding. An old earth ship, human design, clunky and very clearly in a state of repair. Man, he hadn’t seen a Sk-3LD up and running for years. Not that he’d exactly classify the floating junkpile in front of him as ‘up and running’, but it was still in one piece.

They’d let him in with almost suspicious ease, barely questioning what species he was before their apparent leader got bored with the formalities and snapped the neck of the guy in white.

It took all of Dabi's effort to not react.

"Can I stab you?" The imposter in the yellow, blood-splattered suit looked up at him with a fanged grin and a knife brandished in her hand. "Just a little stabby, for fun!"

"What? No!"

For all intents and purposes, Dabi was an imposter. Except for one small issue. He was not a spatium interfectorem. If this... this *girl* stabbed him, he wouldn't be able to do anything against it.

"Aw, c'mon! Just one? You can heal it over immediately!" She grabbed his arm, but Dabi yanked the limb back from her.

"Himiko, he said no!" The guy in white un-snapped his neck with a sickening slow crunch, head turning 180 degrees until it sat properly atop his shoulders. "If he doesn't want to be stabbed, don't stab him."

The girl—Himiko, apparently—pouted. "Spoilsport." But she sheathed the knife regardless. "What's your name anyways, scarface?"

"I go by Dabi at the moment. And don't call me scarface."

"Why not? You're obviously keeping the scars around for *something*, I'm stating a fact."

"Himiko! I'm so sorry for her. I'm Bubaigawara Jin, but you can call me Twice. This devil is Toga Himiko, the grouchy guy who snapped my neck is Shigaraki, the lizard's Spinner, and Kurogiri's... somewhere. You'll know him when you meet him. Nice to have you aboard, Dabi. Sorry for all the blood."

They called themselves The League. The League of what, Dabi still didn't know, but they were adamant about the name. Especially Shigaraki, who—as Dabi quickly discovered—wasn't nearly as intimidating or scary as he thought himself to be.

While Shigaraki was the self-proclaimed leader, Dabi had also quickly discovered he was the leader only in name. The true force behind the ship was a tall, intimidating ...man? His form seemed to be made of a purplish black mist, always shifting, always different, always exuding a quiet power. As Twice had said, Dabi knew who Kurogiri was as soon as he met him, and promptly decided *never* to cross him. He'd never seen the ...man? That would do for now. He'd never seen the man kill, and in all honesty, he didn't really think he wanted to.

"So what do you... do?" he asked one evening, everyone piled into the security room where Shigaraki and Spinner seemed to have disconnected the shipwide cameras, replacing their feeds with old earthen video games they got from fuck knows where.

"Ionno," Toga said, perched on a desk, swinging her legs and kicking the wall. "Whatever we want, I guess."

"So you don't, like... go around looking for ships to infiltrate, looking for other spices to kill?"

"Usually we-" Twice began, but he was quickly cut off by a shout from where Shigaraki and Spinner were paying absolutely no attention to the conversation behind them.

"Fuck you!" Shigaraki yelled. Well, yelled as much as his raspy vocal chords could yelp.

"As I was saying, usu-"

Spinner said nothing in return to Shigaraki, only unhinged his jaw, tongue darting out and skewering his de facto leader in one clean swipe.

Shigaraki was understandably pissed as hell, launching himself forward still with a hole through his abdomen, snapping Spinner's neck. Their tussle soon evolved from deadly to petty, a whirl of slapping and unrefined fists. Toga looked on with glee, clapping her hands, while Twice grimaced, backing into a corner.

For an imposter, Dabi got the sense Twice was unusually adverse to fighting, at least, unnecessary fighting. Dabi had seen him be killed numerous times, but he'd never seen him actually kill anyone. Sure, he threatened it, but Dabi had never seen him go through. If it weren't for the numerous fatal stab wounds he'd seen Twice survive, Dabi would've thought they were ...in similar situations.

"Usually we hang out here," Twice whispered to Dabi, continuing on with the conversation despite the ...happenings behind them. "Sometimes if we get bored, a couple of the others might find a ship or station to infiltrate, but that's happened less since we came across the Shie Hassaikai. Shigaraki and Kai don't get along very well."

"The... Shie Hassaikai?"

"Yeah. They're a bigger group of us, Kai's their leader. Hates getting involved, so he sends out his minions to do the dirty work. Wants to 'cleanse the

universe' or something. Shiggy's declared him as his arch nemesis. Other than Toshinori, that is."

Dabi tried to conceal his shock. He knew who Toshinori was, the famed earthen pilot, head of the biggest interstellar movement earth had launched in, well, ever. The same fleet Dabi had run away from. Dabi's father looked upon the guy bitterly, never being able to overtake him or be better than him.

"Toshinori, as in, All Might captain Toshinori?"

"The very. You'll probably be getting very familiar with the All Might fleet, by the way. Toga's pretty obsessed with Toshinori's protégé, Midoriya."

"What's this about Midoriya?" The noise from the fight had died down, fading back to that of the video game, leaving Toga perfectly able to hear Dabi and Twice's conversation. "He's cute, so are his friends. I want to stab them!" she said with far too much glee.

"Yeah, that's why we're always in their ships. Toga sucks at not getting caught, though, so does Shigaraki."

"I can *hear* you, Twice, don't think I can't."

"Neither of them have managed to actually kill anyone from All Might," Twice whispered to Dabi. "They always go for Yuuei, one of the smaller ships, and the crew have become very good at recognising them"

"...Right." All in all, Dabi got the impression he hadn't landed himself with the most... competent of imposters. At least they hadn't killed him yet.

Given The League had previously been compromised entirely of actual imposters, the crew had no need for a medbay, and it had since been converted in a way not dissimilar to the old security room, to form a sort of bunk room. Dabi, however, was not an actual imposter, and did not want to risk being stabbed in his sleep, so adamantly stuck to the escape pod he'd commandeered to find the ship in the first place, still docked in the otherwise entirely unused docking port.

It wasn't like there were any working clocks aboard the ship, but Kurogiri seemed to have a pretty regular body clock, using it to his advantage to corral the others to at the very least be quiet for a few hours so those who wanted to sleep could.

By those who wanted to sleep, that mostly meant Dabi and Twice, but still, it was appreciated.

It was during one of these quiet times, maybe a month into Dabi's residence with The League—to be honest, he'd sort of lost count; whole no clocks thing kinda made keeping track difficult—when he heard a knock at his pod doors.

That was... well that was new. Usually if people wanted him for something, they'd yell, and once Shigaraki had even fed himself between the locked doors and seemingly materialised crouched on the floor. He'd been trying to hide from Kurogiri or something.

So yeah, people didn't usually knock. Manners weren't a thing.

"Dabi?" It was Toga, and she sounded... calm, for once. "Can I talk to you? I promise I won't stab you. I didn't even bring my knives."

If the knocking wasn't enough to convince Dabi she meant well, her words were. Toga never went *anywhere* without her knives, even around the ship.

So Dabi let her in. Sure, he wasn't at all presentable, his black suit flung over the controls, wearing nothing but a loose tank top and sweats he'd kept from back at the fleet. Sure, he had no way to defend himself if it came to it, but he... but he had a softer spot for Toga. She reminded him of his siblings, of his sister back when they were younger and freer and careless.

Back when he hadn't despised the earthen fleet association with his very being, back when Fuyumi hadn't been left to hold the shattering family together, back when Natsuo hadn't stopped caring about anything, back when Shouto still smiled.

Toga reminded him of that, so sue him, but that wouldn't stop him trusting her.

"What did you wanna talk about?" he said, gesturing to the pilot chair for Toga to perch in, sitting himself on the pitiful platform he called a bed.

Gladly taking the seat, Toga got herself comfortable, crossing her ankles and holding her legs between her arms as she slowly spun herself side to side.

"Oh, uh, I just..." It wasn't like her to be this hesitant. "I just noticed some stuff, and I wanted to like, check with you about it."

"What stuff?" Dabi asked, frowning, concerned as to where this was going. As to what Toga had apparently noticed.

"I mean... I've never seen you kill or anything. Like, like I know Jin doesn't kill either, but I've seen him try, y'know? And it probably shouldn't be like, a thing, but I guess... it's always been so natural to like, threaten to kill someone if they annoy you, and you don't really do that? And when you do it seems kinda

unnatural for you? I dunno, you don't have to answer if you don't wanna. It's just- yeah, it's just a thing."

Toga had let her legs down now, resting her knees on the arms of the pilot chair, arms in her lap, looking down at her fingers. Dabi didn't know what to say.

"Where I came from," he began, trying to work out what he wanted to say as he said it. "We weren't really... allowed to kill people whenever we wanted to. And we would get in trouble if we threatened to as well. I used to say it a lot when I was younger, but... yeah, the habit kinda got drilled out of me." Was that vague enough? He hoped so.

"Ew, that's so gross," Toga said, wrinkling her nose and looking up at Dabi. "What's a threat gonna do? And I'm guessing it was between friends or something. That's so mean!"

"Yeah, well, you don't argue with the captain. Not unless you wanna be thrown out."

"So I take it you argued?"

"Nah, this was my own choice. Whole place is corrupted, like hell was I gonna be part of it." Dabi lay back, sprawled across his bed.

"You say that as if we're any better," Toga joked, nudging Dabi's foot with her own. "But uh, before we get off on too much of a tangent, I kinda... noticed some other stuff."

Dabi rolled his head over so he could see the yellow of her suit in the corner of his eye. "Yeah?"

"I don't think you've been killed before."

Dabi didn't say anything, only looked away.

"And I know- I know that sounds really bad of me to say, and I'm sorry, I just... you seemed so shocked when I asked to stab you when you arrived, and you still get surprised whenever anyone's killed. You seem almost unnecessarily scared of death for someone of a species that can't really die."

"Yeah, well..." Dabi trailed off, pulling himself up to sit against the wall, still not looking at Toga.

"You're not... you're not one of us, are you?" she said softly. "And you don't- I know I just accused you of something kinda *really* big, but I just- you're cool, Dabi. I like you. I don't want anything to happen to you."

There was silence in the pod, neither saying or doing anything until Dabi heard Toga shifting, until he heard her standing to leave.

"What're you gonna do, now you know? Go and tell the rest of the crew? Let Shigaraki snap my neck? Get Kurogiri to throw me out the airlock?"

Toga's footsteps stilled. "'M not gonna tell anyone. Not until you say I can. I meant it when I said I care about you."

Dabi laughed mirthlessly. "Ha, as if. You're an *imposter*, for fuck's sake."

"So are you."

"You literally just told me you figured out I'm *not*."

"And?" Her voice was rising, beginning to get agitated. "Imposter isn't the species name. It's just a nickname. You're as much an imposter as I am, as much a League member as I am."

Dabi met Toga's eyes, her ferocity evident. But... but he could tell it wasn't ferocity against him, but ferocity *for* him. Ferocity to let her love him, to let himself be loved, to let himself have a family again. Toga wanted to accept him fully—she'd told him as much—but he wasn't letting her, too scared of what *could* happen, not paying any attention to what was happening.

"I'm not gonna do *anything*, Dabi, I just- I haven't had family in so long, and now I have all of you guys. I don't want anything to happen to you, and I don't want you to always be scared of- of me."

"I'm not scared of you, Toga," Dabi said, sighing and standing from the bed. "Scared you might accidentally kill me, yeah—or at least I *was*—but I'm not scared of *you*. You... you remind me of *my* family. The good bits of it, at least. Sorry for getting mad at you." He held out a hand to her, a line of apology. What he didn't expect was for her to ignore the hand completely and go straight in for a hug.

"Sorry for calling you out," she mumbled into his chest.

"Issok. It was gonna have to happen at some point. At least this way it's not just my secret to keep."

Toga turned her head to look up at Dabi. "Can I still threaten to stab you?"

"I wouldn't expect anything less of you."



PARTNERS IN CRIME

By kei

Hanta and Mina are not great at their tasks. Most of their crewmates don't trust them anymore and tend to run away whenever they see them.

Before they set out for this long journey in space, Hanta and Mina were decent at their jobs. Not the best, but not the worst either. What mattered was that they got their tasks completed and hardly anything went wrong at the space center.

Whenever something goes wrong on the spaceship, at least one of them is involved. First, Hanta was in electrical when all of the lights went out. It was discovered that Jirou had been killed when the lights came back on. Then, Hanta and Mina both hadn't done their tasks in navigation, even though Bakugou had already reminded them to get to work. By the time they got to navigation, it turned out that Kaminari had been killed. And the most incriminating thing? Midoriya found Mina standing next to Uraraka's dead body with blood on her hands.

That was a fun one to explain to the rest of them.

No matter how many times Hanta and Mina try to explain that they're not plotting anything, no one seems to believe them. It's a miracle that they haven't been ejected from the ship yet, although usually, it's because no one can really decide whether or not it's Hanta or Mina, or both of them in cahoots. Most of the time Bakugou wants to eject both of them, but thankfully, Kirishima coaxes Bakugou into letting them go.

They like sticking together during missions; it's something they've always done. Hanta and Mina have been best friends since they were babies, so of course they're going to stay by each other's side. It's not very surprising that Hanta likes to cover for Mina and vice-versa, which unfortunately only makes them look more suspicious in their crewmates' eyes.

So far, five people have been killed. Jirou, Kaminari, Uraraka, Ojiro, and Mineta, although Mineta deserved that since he was being a pervert while the girls were showering. Even in space, Mineta was still a disgusting creep. The only people left on this ship are Hanta, Mina, Todoroki, Bakugou, Midoriya, and Kirishima as the other suspects had already been booted off of the ship.

It's been a few weeks since anyone died, and Hanta and Mina think that they're doing a better job of not being suspicious or incompetent. Although their luck doesn't last for long, as it turns out that someone has sabotaged the oxygen of all things. While everyone makes it out alive thanks to Bakugou and Midoriya's quick thinking, it's clear that everyone is just a little salty about it. Just a little.

It seems as if everyone is on edge with how often their mission goes sideways. Everyone on this ship just wanted to explore life on new planets, they didn't sign up for a killing spree. They've been looking forward to this journey for years now, and it's incredibly disheartening when every single step seems to be the wrong one.

The alarm for the emergency meeting rings throughout the whole ship, and Hanta and Mina begrudgingly head over to the cafeteria to confer.

Once everyone is there, Bakugou slams his hands down on the table. "Alright, we have to figure out who the *fuck* is sabotaging everything." He points a finger at Hanta and Mina who hold their hands up in defense. "I bet it's one of these two extras."

Midoriya starts waving his hands frantically. "Wait, wait, wait, let's not accuse anyone of anything! We're all excellent friends, and I'm sure that the oxygen must've had some sort of malfunction."

"Speak for yourself, Deku," Bakugou grumbles. "There is at least one extra who is fucking everything up for all of us, and I'm going to find out who it is. Hell, you sound like you're suspicious too."

Midoriya grumbles. "How do I know you're not the traitor either, huh?! You've been standing here accusing everyone of being a traitor and we have no idea whether or not you're innocent!"

When they started their mission, no one had volunteered to take the role of captain other than Midoriya and Bakugou. It was a unanimous decision to have co-captains, with their excellent leadership skills and efficiency, although that has led to a *lot* of in-fighting.

Bakugou tackles Midoriya to the ground while Kirishima and Todoroki do their best to pull them away from each other. Hanta and Mina are just watching everything unfold. It's not uncommon for them to be fighting a lot, in fact, most of the crewmates would probably find it weird if they *weren't* fighting.

Once Bakugou finally lets go of Midoriya, he adjourns the emergency meeting, having gotten nowhere since it started. It seems as if Hanta and Mina will live to see another day, thank goodness.

Hanta heads over to storage while Mina finishes up her task in the MedBay.

In all honesty, Hanta is just trying his best. He's not entirely sure what he's doing most of the time but if there's any way that he can help the ship run smoothly, he'll jump at the opportunity. It's not his fault that sometimes things go wrong.

(Well sometimes it is, but Hanta chooses to ignore that.)

And Mina doesn't mean any harm either, she's just easily distracted and sometimes happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As Hanta fixes the wires in storage, he feels confident that he can do this. Normally he doesn't do a very good job of fixing the wires, but today he's being careful and he's making sure to look closely.

It seems as though he's jinxed it, because moments later, he cuts the wrong wire for the millionth time and the electricity goes out yet again, sending an electric shock throughout his body.

"Ow!" Hanta yelps.

Soon enough, people start coming out to the storage room to find the source of the problem. Everyone can hear Bakugou from the other side of the spaceship, spewing out strings of expletives and profanities and thrashing around in frustration.

Hanta winces when he suddenly hears a *crash!* in the distance.

Bakugou appears moments later with a scowl on his face and his arms folded across his chest. His eyes bulge out when he sees Hanta right next to the wires.

"That's it! I've had enough of you!" He lunges forward at Hanta, growling at him.

Hanta ducks for cover and braces himself for the impact, but Todoroki and Mina thankfully hold him back.

"Let me go!" he yells, trying to wriggle free from their grasp.

"Not until you promise not to kill Hanta," Mina says.

Hanta is very thankful for both Todoroki and Mina's strength right now. Without their help, he'd probably snap like a twig under Bakugou's wrath. It's a miracle he passed the physical exam before boarding the spaceship. While he's in shape, he's certainly not athletic like Todoroki or Kirishima.

"Fine, fine," Bakugou says, grumbling. "I promise not to kill him."

Todoroki and Mina let go of him, and Bakugou walks away in a huff, muttering something about finishing his tasks.

"So," Hanta draws out, laughing nervously as he covers up the wire panel, effectively hiding his mistakes. "I think it's time for dinner. It's my turn to make it today anyway."

"Perfect," Todoroki answers. "Then maybe I can get another refill of instant coffee."

Hanta looks at him strangely. "I thought you hated that stuff?"

Back on earth, Todoroki was notorious for having the sweetest and most caffeinated cups of coffee in the world. He'd show up twenty minutes late every morning, holding Trenta-sized coffees with excessive amounts of syrup and whipped cream and a myriad of extra shots to the point where it looked like a heart attack in liquid form. There was one day where Hanta decided to try it out for himself, just to see what was so special about Todoroki's coffee order.

Hanta vowed to never try it ever again.

"I do, but considering that we're going to be in space for the foreseeable future, I will take whatever coffee I can get." Todoroki doesn't even give Hanta the chance to respond, as he brushes past and starts walking to the cafeteria without him.

Hanta simply shrugs and follows Todoroki out to the cafeteria, with Mina in tow.

Todoroki immediately marches to the coffee machine, determined. Hanta grabs the food from the fridge, ready to prepare it. Once Todoroki's coffee is brewing, the three of them work together to make dinner.

They end up making a mess in the kitchen, laughing until their stomachs hurt and dinner has been long forgotten. Bakugou yells at them to clean up the mess once he hears the ruckus going on, but Hanta and Mina can't bring themselves to care. It's been a long time since they've had fun like this.

Once everything is cleaned up and dinner has been served, they head to their quarters for the night, ready to forget today and to start anew. They're not too

far away from their next destination, surely they can make it a few more days without anything else going astray, right?

Wrong.

In just a few days, a lot can go wrong.

First, Mina accidentally tossed out the wrong samples. Then, Hanta handled the garbage without knowing that Mina threw away the wrong samples. Hanta happened to slice his hand while making lunch at the same time lights went out—for the millionth time, might he add—and when the lights went back on, Todoroki was found dead right next to him.

Hanta wonders who would be cruel enough to kill Todoroki. There really must be a traitor on this spaceship, because Todoroki had done nothing wrong. He was patient and he was extremely kind to everyone around him. Todoroki didn't have a mean bone in his body, but he liked to piss Bakugou off whenever he was being, y'know, *Bakugou*.

Other than Mina, he considered Todoroki to be one of his best friends. Todoroki was always willing to listen to whatever troubles he may have had, and Hanta really enjoyed his company.

Bakugou and Kirishima hover over Todoroki's dead body to inspect it.

"Bakugou, you—"

"Zip it, let me focus," Bakugou barks out, and he takes a look at the stab wounds.

Hanta and Mina nervously cling to each other as Bakugou pokes and prods.

"Alright, Tape Face," Bakugou says with a sigh, standing up. "I believe you, the knife you're holding doesn't match the size of the holes on Half n' Half's back."

Hanta sighs in relief, although he doesn't feel like he can celebrate just yet. Someone is killing random people on this ship, and they need to get to the bottom of this.

"And where were *you* when Todoroki was stabbed?" Bakugou asks, pointing to Mina.

"I was in Communications," she answers.

"Shitty Hair and I were fixing the engines."

Kirishima holds up a finger. "Wait a minute, where's Midoriya? Has anyone seen him?"

Realization dawns on Bakugou's face as he pieces together what happened. He takes a look at Todoroki lying on the floor next to him in a puddle of his own blood. "How... Why... Why would he kill Half n' Half?" he asks.

Hanta plays back the events of how everything happened. He was making lunch when suddenly Todoroki entered the room.

Todoroki had this glum look on his face as he entered the kitchen. Hanta grew concerned, wondering what was making his friend so upset.

"What happened to your hand?" Todoroki asked.

Hanta laughed sheepishly. "Just making lunch. What's up with you? You look kind of sad."

"Well, I—"

Before Todoroki could finish his sentence, the lights went out.

"He figured out Midoriya's plan," Hanta blurts out. Everyone turns their heads to look at Hanta, and he clears his throat to explain. "Because Todoroki entered the kitchen right before the lights went out. Midoriya used it to his advantage that I'd just happened to slice my hand at the same time." He holds up his hand, wrapped in gauze. "He didn't want Todoroki to tell me that he was the traitor."

It's hard to believe that Midoriya is the traitor, especially with how uplifting he'd been throughout the whole mission.

Tears start streaming down Bakugou's face as he falls to the ground. "No, no, no. Why?!" he screams. "Stupid Deku... stupid, stupid Deku," he mutters, over and over again.

Kirishima leans down next to him, but Bakugou swats him away.

Despite their convoluted relationship, Hanta knows that Bakugou cares for Midoriya deeply. If he were in Bakugou's position, he'd probably react the same way.

Just then, Midoriya shows up.

"You figured it out, huh," he says, an evil smirk on his face.

Bakugou growls.

"How, you might be wondering?" Midoriya says. "Well, it's simple. I was sent by a rival organization to infiltrate the spaceship and collect the samples from this mission, and none of you suspected anything different."

Hanta can feel everyone getting angrier, but all he feels is sadness. He thought Midoriya was a friend. Hanta sees the good in everyone around him. Midoriya had been moral support for everyone on this trip; he didn't want to believe that Midoriya could be the traitor, even as he slowly started figuring things out. Many of Hanta's crewmates—friends, actually—are dead because of Midoriya, and somehow, Hanta can't bring himself to feel angry.

"And you, Mina," Midoriya continues, "I was so *close* to getting you off of the ship when I killed Ochako-chan. But alas, Tsuyu was sacrificed."

Mina snarls, but Hanta places a hand on her shoulder in an attempt to soothe her.

Bakugou stands up and wipes the tears from his eyes. "Alright then. You know what's next."

"Let's get this over with."

Once Midoriya has been ejected off of the ship, Bakugou turns to Hanta and Mina.

"I'm sorry that I thought you were the traitors," he says.

Mina and Hanta pull him into a hug. "It's okay, we're not mad at you."

Kirishima joins the hug too, and Bakugou breaks down into tears once again. There's nothing they can do to erase the damage Midoriya caused or to undo all of the pain, but Hanta and the rest of the crew are determined to make the most out of the rest of this space mission. It's what everyone would've wanted.



RPG DREAMS

By Starry

The Skeld is mostly quiet except for the sounds of various machines whirring through tasks. At some point, Ochako finds herself watching the trash get sent into space and sighs, tapping on the window.

At the beginning of this game, the crewmates of this session knew there were two imposters on the ship. Ochako's exhausted as their full group of ten has dwindled down to a solid five; Katsuki got killed in the first few rounds, his corpse found at Admin where he was stuck with card swipe.

Mina was also found dead, and Ochako had stumbled across Denki standing over Eijirou's bloody body with a knife in hand. She had slammed her hand down on the report button with a scream, the remainder tossed him out, and now they were down to half.

In their current situation, there is one imposter left.

Ochako still doesn't know who it is.

She knows it's not her (obviously), which leaves Tenya, Izuku, Shouto, and Momo. Honestly, considering everyone's been doing their tasks...

It could be anyone. Maybe Momo, who's been trying to fix the Reactor this entire time? Is it Tenya, who's been terrified of going into Electrical? Or maybe even Shouto, whose stoic exterior would make for a great imposter who gets away with it. Ochako's watched him lie with a straight face to a lot of people. It's actually pretty impressive, especially when she's definitely caught him before and he still almost gets away with it.

Focus.

Ochako shakes her head. She hasn't met up with anyone in about fifteen minutes, mindlessly shifting through her tasks. There's no one in Storage with her anyways, and she's not really in the mood to go hunt down her fellow crewmates.

Remember that one of them is a killer! They're gonna try to trap you; stay alert, and keep an eye on the cameras! You only have a few more tasks to finish, so hold your head up and keep on moving!

"I'm really hoping it's no one I trust dearly," Ochako says down the empty hallway as she makes her way to Security. "Since they're *all* my friends, it just means I'll get murdered by someone I love or we'll win the game with our tasks done. No big deal. Also, if there's any ghosts around, could one of you help?"

No one answers. This session of Among Us was given to them by Hatsume Mei, who apparently decided to create an entire virtual world dedicated to the damn game. She'd taken some "breaks" in various projects of hers to completely create a new world and in the process, managed to rope in the hero students.

Class 3-A was first only because a few friends were her test subjects. Mei had justified her reasoning with a wave and a response that was basically: *"You guys are hero students! If anyone's going to test this for me, it'll be the kids who are equipped to fight villains constantly! Fair warning, though, no Quirks are allowed so you'll have to do this by yourself. It follows the basic rules of the game so do your best and try to make sure that your death is quick!"*

"Great, thanks," Denki had said sarcastically, and the other students shuddered at the idea of being thrown into a video game while dealing with overpowered teenagers who would willingly cause crimes for no particular reason.

Ochako's got nothing to lose, personally. She's fought against the League of Villains before in a war and she watched one of her best friends murder a Yakuza leader; the only reason he lucked out and didn't get charged is because a child had managed to reverse his death with her insanely powerful Quirk.

Unfortunately, she knows her friend group is more than capable of murder, and Ochako *also* knows that her Quirk could definitely kill a person from a specific height. (Don't ask.) It's something that makes her friends powerful, but it *also* means that they're the worst people to go against in a game that relies on murder and tricking others.

Ochako makes it into Security and heads on over to the cameras, switching on the panel and watching the screen light up with four different feeds. She scrolls through them for a moment, eyes flickering between the locations. There's no one outside security so she affords to look away at other places.

She watches Tenya go sprinting up a hallway away from Admin to the Cafeteria and looks over at the hallway next to Navigation. "Wonder what's got him running—"

Ochako feels the blood drain from her face.

There's a body slumped in the corner, blood starting to pool at the entrance of Navigation. Before Ochako can scream, she hears the button go off and she's dragged to the center table with everyone else.

Shouto looks deadpan, Tenya looks *terrified*, and Izuku looks shocked. "What happened?!" he tries asking, but Tenya cuts him off by jabbing a finger at him. "WHERE WERE YOU RIGHT NOW!" he shouts, towering over Izuku.

Poor Izuku looks scared shitless. "I was in Shields! I'm tapping the hexagons to fix them! Oh my god, where's Momo? Is she dead? I saw her about ten minutes ago, I thought she was with you—"

"I was in Oxygen," Shouto cuts in. "I saw someone was on the cameras, though. I'm assuming that's you, Ochako?"

"That's me," Ochako says weakly. "I saw Tenya run from Admin so I don't *think* it was him. What...what happened?"

"I saw Momo's dead body in the hallway from Admin!" Tenya shouts. "I believe Ochako is not the imposter, as she was on cameras, but it must be one of you! Both of you were relatively close to Navigation!"

"You could've vented from that hallway," Shouto points out, and *fuck*, he's got a point. "It's not that hard. Even if she saw you run from Admin, you could've killed Momo and vented from the hallway before running to the button. I'm emptying leaves right now and Izuku said he's fixing Shields."

"I've only seen Shouto and Momo recently." Izuku winces, nervously wringing his hands together. "I feel like Shouto would've killed me if it was him? We were alone earlier in MedBay doing tasks and he didn't kill me."

Tenya's face is starting to turn red. "I'm not the imposter!"

"Sounds like something an imposter would say."

(Momo, floating above the table with all the other ghosts and eating some popcorn, snorts at Shouto's completely stoic expression.)

"I can assure you I'm not! How dare you accuse me of *murder*, this is something I would *never* do—" Tenya shouts, starting to tremble.

"Stain," Izuku interrupts, and Shouto audibly snorts at that. "Please don't lie Tenya, we all know you'd willingly kill a man. Maybe this time, you actually thought you'd get away with it! Did you kill Momo? You could've checked Admin to see where we all were, vented to kill her, and gotten out of there to report it."

"That's true," Shouto adds, trying not to laugh at how red Tenya's face is. Ochako quietly notes that he's pretty much the same shade as Shouto's hair. "Tenya, it looks like you really tried to pin the blame on us. Why would you kill Momo when we're just trying to win?"

"YOU'RE THE CLOSEST TO NAVIGATION!" Tenya jabs a finger at Shouto, who blinks back at him. Ochako sighs and looks at the countdown, nearing zero with every second. "Tenya," she says wearily, and all her boys turn to look at her. "I think it's time. You're working on your lying skills and they're getting better, they really are, but they definitely didn't help here. I'm so sorry."

Shouto immediately hits Tenya's name to vote him off, Izuku following a few seconds later. Ochako does her best to ignore Tenya's yelling before voting him out too. It's a rough few seconds where their votes pop up and they realize that he voted to skip the round instead of voting for anyone else.

Did we vote off the wrong person?

Tenya's hurt expression is evident from the airlock before they throw him out, crossing his arms in a stern manner as he's launched out into space. Ochako already knows they're going to get a huge lecture later, but if this pays off...

Tenya vanishes into nothing. The three reappear at the table.

"Ah, crap." Shouto idly says, sighing and rolling his shoulders. "That's incredibly unfortunate, isn't it? Well, if it's one of you, I'd like to die in a very dramatic fashion that'll make Katsuki proud. Could you position me at cardswipe after I complete it? I wanna see the look on his face when I nail it on the first try."

"Oh man," Izuku whispers, starting to back up. "Tenya's definitely going to talk to us about the merits of lying and how we, as heroes, are going to have to trust our gut and brain. I'm not looking forward to that, and I'm not looking forward to being killed here."

"I agree." Ochako nods rapidly as she backs up from Shouto. She doesn't have a lot of options here. It's either Izuku, who managed to convince them to vote Tenya off, or it's Shouto, who's given up the entire jig and is now on his way to kill one of them.

Ochako doesn't want to stick around to find out, so she throws a peace sign and runs off down the left hallway to finish her final task. "Please, please just let us win." She begs to the ceiling, placing a bet that there's ghosts following her around. "I don't know who it is, and I *really* don't want to know! Whoever's left with tasks, please finish them!"

Her final task is in the Reactor. Simon Says is one of the longest tasks to finish; there's a reason she's held this one off for last. Ochako really tempted fate by going to Electrical early in the game with Eijirou by her side. They had both protected the other (even though he definitely could've killed her and vented out) and she got those tasks done relatively quickly.

She'll never forget the despair she felt when she found Eijirou slumped down a wall, trying to finish a download task. Rest in pieces, bud.

Ochako sprints in and immediately starts the keypad up, fingers trembling as she goes to tap the lower left button. It's a tedious process that makes her palms start sweating, but she's doing her best to—

The lights flicker out.

The Reactor plunges into darkness.

Ochako hits the wrong button on her final sequence.

"*Shit,*" Ochako hisses in English, eyes closing as she leans down to smack her head against the console. She has to *restart the entire damn thing*. And go fix lights, whichever came first.

She can't afford to wait for her fellow crewmate to fix them, so she has to finish Simon Says again. Ochako curses Mei under her breath. "If she wasn't fixing my zipline on my costume," she grumbles, tapping the glowing buttons in the dark, "I would go fight her in a spar, no support weapons allowed. This is the *worst*, how am I ever supposed to do this in a normal game?"

Ochako hits the final button, and sighs in relief as her taskbar proudly turns green. "Oh thank *goodness,*" she breathes. "I guess I'll have to go fix the lights, since apparently my friends are horrible people who want us to *fail* and die in the dark—"

A vent opens right next to her.

"*NO!*" Ochako screams, scrambling to run. "I'm not going down like this! Go away!"

There's no answer from the shadowy figure that's reaching out for her. She catches a glint of the knife when the Reactor glows for a split second, but it's not enough to catch the imposter's face. Her hero instincts finally kick in and she throws a punch at the imposter, hearing a startled yelp.

Izuku yelps like that, but Shouto's starting to become more vocal too! Oh no, I still don't know who this is!

She's got to make a split second decision. After reviewing her options, she decides to pivot and haul ass to Electrical; if she can turn the lights on, she can try and dodge the imposter and hit the Report button.

(Or, if anyone died in that entire fiasco, maybe she can find their body and report that too.)

Ochako runs through the Engine room and skids around the corner, pumping her arms to go faster. She rounds the door to Electrical and hurries to the panel, hands shaking as she goes to flip the switches. "Please, please, please..."

With the fifth in position, the lights start to flicker on. Ochako breathes a sigh of relief and turns around to face the hallway when the doors slide shut right in her face. "Well that's not great," she hisses out, whirling around when she hears the vent open. With the lights on, she can see a shadow approach, and tenses up on instinct.

What catches her off-guard, though, is the pool of blood that's still fresh with a limp hand in the corner. But...with one person dead, and there were only three people left, why is the game still going? Shouldn't the imposter have won already?

Ochako squints at the hand, trying to gather information as fast as she can. It's pale, slender, and...

No scars.

"Shouto," she breathes out, eyes going wide at the realization. "Oh, *god*, he had us believing he wasn't the imposter, he used us to save his own life, so it's—"

"I knew you were smarter than that," Midoriya Izuku smiles as he rounds the corner, knife in hand. He looks nonchalant even with blood coating his green suit. "Poor Tenya really took the fall for me and I do feel kinda bad about that, but! Here we are! I'm sorry it had to come to this."

"Damn you," Ochako growls, lifting her head in defiance. "You're not picking the next movie at game night, Deku! How are you even here? The game's supposed to be over!"

Izuku's face slightly drops. "Aw, man, I was really hoping we could watch...fair enough. Um, probably a glitch? I killed Shouto when he was trying to fix the lights and he ran away. He's definitely pouting right now."

(Shouto, floating with Momo and pouting, wearily sighs and gets a clap on the back from Eijirou. Katsuki snorts in amusement.)

“Fine. Congratulations, Deku. You win.” Ochako sighs and lifts her arms, bracing herself.

“Thanks, Ochako!” Izuku says happily. He readies the knife, a flash of green lightning flickers, and the knife stabs forward. Ochako’s entire world goes black in an instant.

Defeat.

When they exit Mei’s lab, laughing and cursing at the same time, Ochako jabs Izuku in the side and snickers as he yelps. “You’re a terrifying imposter, you know that right?” she asks, and smiles when Izuku blushes. “I try! Can...can we still watch that new action movie?”

The Dekusquad crowds around their champion and Tenya, with Shouto and Momo flanking him, replies, “Of course we can! Well done on your accomplishment, Midoriya! However, I insist we have a talk regarding my lying skills—”

Ochako falls in line with her best friends, casting a glance back at Mei’s lab. She shakes off the eerie feeling from the pain in her chest and presses on to Heights Alliance, taking in the sunshine with her fellow heroes.



SABOTEUR

By Greyscale

Yuuei Mechanics was one of the most selective organizations in the field, maintaining only forty members at all times. Hitoshi was incredibly lucky that his mentor, Aizawa, had been a former member and wrote him a glowing reference which allowed him to join. It had been his dream to join this group, and now that Hitoshi was here, he didn't really know what to do with himself or what manner to act in. Should he be gruff and aloof like Aizawa? Or friendly enough for the others to accept him as one of their own? Hitoshi hated not knowing because it made him nervous. And now he was acting like a blushing first year mechanic on his first job, unable to even hit the access buttons in the correct order to unlock the manifolds.

Deep breaths, Hitoshi, you got this.

He steps into the shuttle that's going to take them to ship, a standard Skeld type. He stops after he enters, clicks his heels together, and, with his right hand over his heart, performs a shallow bow. "Hello, everyone, I'm the new mechanic, Shinsou Hitoshi. Pleash take care of me." Fuck, why is he this nervous, there's literally no reason—if he can calibrate the distributor on the first try while Aizawa was breathing down his back, then he'd be one hundred percent fine on this job.

"Welcome to the group, Shinsou-kun!" Green hair and a blinding smile greet him, "We're all very excited to have you on board!"

"Welcome!" the rest of the crew echoes.

"Ah, uh, thank you," Hitoshi replies awkwardly, hoping the first day jitters would just go away. As he makes his way to the only empty seat left, he glances at suit storages, noticing the pink button darkened.

"Dare I ask what happened to the pink suit?" Hitoshi drawls, hoping his sarcasm would mask his nervousness. His voice doesn't betray him this time.

"Ah, magnifique question, monsieur!" Aoyama—as his name tag says—exclaims, "Our alien queen herself has decided to requisition it permanently." He shoots a goofy smile at the newcomer.

Hitoshi blinks. Everyone else is laughing, and he feels like he's missing out on something.

"Oh man, Aoyama-kun, you're so dramatic," Kirishima chuckles before turning towards Hitoshi to explain, "What he means is Mina was so excited to finally win the war for the pink suit that she forgot to take it off when we returned to HQ. By the time anyone noticed, this shuttle had already left for our month-long deployment."

"Was she punished?" Hitoshi blurts out before he can stop himself. Man, he really needs to stop doing that, "It's just, with Yuuei's prestige, management can't have been happy about that, right?"

"Mah, Kirin, you really gotta stop giving people half the story," Jirou admonishes the redhead in response to Hitoshi's question. "Yuuei's actually pretty lax about these things. We may seem like we're stuck up because of our reputation, but trust me, everyone here knows how to loosen up," she adds for Hitoshi's benefit.

"Ah, well, uh, all's well that ends well, I guess," Hitoshi mutters.

Kirishima shoots him a thumbs up and a sharp grin.

Before Hitoshi can ask any other questions, the shuttle lurches and Ojiro goes flying out of his seat.

"Hah," Bakugou shouts, "That's what you get for not buckling in, Tails."

"Shut up, Bakugou," the other boy snaps back good-naturedly, tail flicking over to whack the crude blond on the head, "You're the one that forced me to take the seat with the broken seatbelt in the first place."

"I wanted to see if you could hang on by yourself and thus be better than a damn extra, but, unfortunately, you didn't pass," Bakugou smirks.

Ojiro looks offended for all of two seconds before a matching smirk appears on his face. "Damn, Bakugou, I didn't know you thought so highly of me. Thinking I have what it takes to not be an extra? That's practically a compliment in Bakugou-ese."

Hitoshi's head is swinging back and forth between the two arguing blonds and decides to slowly back away. Yeah, no. He's not getting in the middle of that. Everyone seems intent on watching the argument unfold, so Hitoshi figures he might as well get a head start. Now what color suit to pick ... obviously the purple one. Aizawa had let him practice with some of the older models that were no longer in use, and the purple suits always made Hitoshi feel just a smidge more confident. Yes, he presses the button for purple, the suit

locker opening in a puff of steam. He grabs his uniform and exits the shuttle confidently. It's going to be a great first day, he just knows it.

Everyone is pre-occupied by Ojiro and Bakugou's banter, when they're suddenly interrupted by a snarl.

"Alright, fuckers," Jirou yells, "Which one of you took my color?"

Midoriya looks at Iida who looks at Tsuyu who looks at Kirishima. No one dares make eye contact—except for the fearless Aoyama.

"Ah, calm down, mademoiselle. I'm sure there's a logical explanation for this," he says serenely.

"And?" Jirou raises an eyebrow. The normally spacey blond scans the ship quickly, eyes landing on an empty seat.

"Oui! The new mechanic! Uh, Gucci Eyebags!" Aoyama snaps his fingers, "He doesn't know anyone's preferences and must have taken purple while Monsieur Bakugou and Monsieur Ojiro were having an epic spar of wits. You must forgive him, mademoiselle! He's new!"

Jirou sighs. The shiny blond makes a point. "Fine, just this once, I'll take red." She glares at everyone else still standing there. "And if any of you *ever* take purple, you'll be dead to me, understand?"

"Understood!" They agree in unison. Jirou really was scary when she lost her cool.

Once they were out of the immediate danger zone, Kirishima pipes up, "Uh, guys what am I supposed to do?"

They all knew that Kirishima always used red, but no one wanted to defy Jirou in her foul mood.

Tsuyu shrugs one shoulder. "Try the next manliest color?" she suggests.

"Hmmm, you're right. Thanks, Tsuyu-chan!" Kirishima chirps as he grabs the orange suit.

"Man, I hope I can be as manly as Bakugou," he mutters on his way off the shuttle.

Everyone's head swivels to look at Bakugou, anticipating another blow up of Jirou-proportions. Bakugou sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. " Just

because Shitty Hair took my color doesn't mean I'm going to throw a tantrum; I'm not a child."

He's met with disbelieving stares as the group has just enough restraint to not bring up all the times Bakugou *did throw a tantrum* over miniscule things.

The blond just scoffs as he jabs the button for the green suit, muttering under his breath about it fitting his 'theme' or something.

Everyone's frozen for a moment of indecision when Midoriya finally takes charge.

"Alright, so I'm going to go with, uh, blue since my green and red are taken," he reasons out loud.

"Sounds good. Thank you for your sacrifice," Iida intones, hands chopping the air.

"Ah, no need to make it so dramatic, Iida-kun!" Midoriya responds, "Besides, blue was one of Yagi's preferred colors, so, really, this is a blessing in disguise to help me be closer to my mentor!"

"As expected of the top mechanic of Yuuei!" Iida praises once again, elbow accidentally smashing into Aoyama, who had gotten too close.

"Oh! But Iida, you usually take blue, so I should probably choose a different color—"

"No," the bespectacled mechanic insists, "It's fine. I will use the white suit, much like my brother, Tensei, the Turbo Mechanic!"

The two walk off, Midoriya with stars in his eyes as he asks Iida about Tensei for the millionth time, and Iida with a small smile at his brother getting the recognition he deserves.

At the entrance, he turns around, taking stock of the people left standing.

"Okay, so, Ojiro-kun, I know you usually take white, but you'd be fine with yellow, right? I think it sorta matches your tail so it'd fit aesthetically. And Todoroki-kun, you can take cyan since it matches your eye, ya know? And Tsuyu-chan! Lime has always been your second choice, right? So, you can just use that!" Midoriya instructs, not even needing to breathe at any point during or after his long-winded directives. Was he even human?

"Sounds good, Mido-kun," they chime, grabbing their suits, dressing quickly.

"Wait," they hear a voice moan from the ground, "What about moi?"

"AOYAMA?" Midoriya's pitch went up two octaves in shock. "Oh my god, are you okay?"

He tosses his hair sparkles somehow appearing with the action. "Of course, one as magnifique as myself cannot be taken out by a mere elbow from an enthusiastic workmate!"

"I-if you're sure, Aoyama-kun."

"Of course! Now, about the suits," his eyes sharpen uncharacteristically, "What colors do I have left to choose from?"

"... You have black or brown," Ojiro informs hesitantly.

Aoyama blinks once.

The remaining crew members blink twice.

The still sparkling blond is frozen in a dramatic pose from his previous proclamation. " ... What did you just say?"

"Ojiro-kun said that the remaining colors are black and brown," Tsuyu repeats bravely.

Aoyama collapses into a boneless heap.

"Ah, are you okay?" Midoriya surges forward. "Oh god, where'd we put the medic kit. Why can't it be somewhere easy to find, holy—"

"Midoriya-chan, he's fine!" Tsuyu stops his mutter storm which was about to inch everyone out of the space shuttle.

"But he collapsed!" Midoriya practically shouts.

"He's just being dramatic!" Ojiro shouts back.

"... brightness ..."

They all inch closer to Aoyama's prone body.

"I think he's trying to say something," Shouto monotones.

"How could you betray my brightness like this!" Aoyama moans, "The years I've dedicated to aesthetic! The training I put my eyes through to withstand even the brightest of shades! All for what? To be betrayed at the last moment like this? To have to choose between brown and ... *black*???"

"Mah, I'm sure it's not that bad," Ojiro tries to placate him, accidentally activating further rage within the blond.

"Surely, you must be jesting," Aoyama hisses at the tailed mechanic, "for I cannot think of any light in which this situation may be viewed as *not that bad*."

"Uh," Ojiro gulps, unsure of how to extract himself.

Todoroki, fortunately, comes to the rescue, "Ojiro promised to show me a trick to prime the shields without having to step near the vent; so, we'll have to get going." He then proceeds to drag the still frozen Ojiro out of the shuttle, quite nearly pulling the tailed mechanic's arm off in the process.

"Aoyama-kun," Tsuyu says once the dust from Todoroki's hasty retreat had settled, "You should probably pick the lesser of two evils."

He sighs, looking back and forth between the button for the black suit and the brown suit. On one hand, black was the antithesis of brightness. On the other hand, brown was ... poop colored.

Fuck it. Black it was.

Aoyama jabs the button for the black suit, mood emitting a certain feeling of darkness as well. *That Shinsou will pay.*

Everyone is out and about doing tasks; Bakugou's failing to start the reactor; everything is normal. That is, everything is normal until the lights go out and Hitoshi can only see where his feet are from the barely-there glowing of his suit. Fuck, the lights are out. *Okay, don't panic, Hitoshi. You know what to do. You've practiced this with Aizawa a million times before.*

He pulls out the holographic map and heads towards Electricity. When he gets there, Hitoshi doesn't see anyone else there. Strange. He shrugs it off and gets to work opening the panel and trying to flick all the light switches on. However, just as he gets to the last one, he realizes all the switches on the left he had flicked on were now flicked off. Strange.

Hitoshi tries to flick them on again, but now the right switches are off? He starts flicking wildly, trying to throw the saboteur off, but it doesn't work.

"What the fuck?" he curses quietly but with feeling.

He gets off the light panel, and sees Aoyama there, flicking wildly at the lights as well.

"Dude, what the fuck?" Hitoshi growls.

Aoyama closes the light panel as well. "Huh?" he raises his right eyebrow, "I don't talk to color-stealing heathens that force bright lights like myself to wear this monstrosity of a color!"

"... You're wearing black," Hitoshi deadpans.

"A most ghastly color!"

"Dude, it's just black. Fuck it, if it makes you that mad, I'll literally switch suits with you," Hitoshi continues.

"You fool! You absolute buffoon! You *heathen*! Don't you know that Yuuei suits lock while not on the shuttle? There's no way for us to switch!" Aoyama snarls. "Besides, I don't want purple; I want yellow."

"Wait what? Then how is this my fault?"

"You took purple!"

"I don't follow."

"It forced Jirou-san to pick red, which forced Kirishima-san to pick orange, and so on and so on until I. I! was left with only black or brown!" Aoyama rants.

"I, uh, oops?" Hitoshi stutters.

"How are you going to pay me back for this humiliation?" Aoyama demands.

Hitoshi gulps, remembering the last piece of advice Aizawa had given him before he started at Yuuei. The purple-haired mechanic resigns himself to his fate.

"I'll do your next five distributor calibrations," Hitoshi offers.

"Make it ten."

"Seven."

"Deal."

They shake hands. It was not a great first day. And it wasn't going to be a great next week either.



TEETERING ON POLUS

By Soren_Bleu_Kun

The two of them are in the labs when the lights go off.

"Midoriya?"

"I'm still here."

He makes sure to never wander off too far in the dark. His only job is to trail All Might in the little copy of his iconic blue space suit, taking down his notes with clumsy fingers still trying to get used to the gloves - and definitely not wandering off in the dark.

"I didn't know that the lighting here was going to be so bad," he comments lightly while the two of them wait.

On Polus, carrying around flashlights is a must and the backup generators have to be on standby at all times. It's what keeps things running when the main power system gives out. It's the way the two of them can stay in the lab and watch their samples get tested, the light from the machine bouncing off the linoleum floor and everything on the tables made of glass.

It isn't much light to work with for Midoriya, but it's enough.

All Might himself looks especially tired in the low light. Who knew that running a base on a planet he isn't from would be tiring?

Really, before now Midoriya hadn't thought about it.

"It wasn't always like this, my boy..."

He doesn't elaborate, never does. For the most part, Midoriya can get his information from elsewhere. According to the rumors alone, there used to be an electrician who handled those things. With him gone, for reasons he doesn't know, things have gotten worse over the years. The few times that Midoriya's convinced All Might to have them go to electricity when the powers go out to try and fix them before someone else has to, half the crew is in there already trying to figure out how to repower everything individually.

It would probably go faster if they all worked together, thinking about it, but Midoriya doesn't bring that idea up. They've been here for years, they probably know what they're doing.

Usually it takes a couple of minutes, but with the backup generators at least keeping everything running it isn't that big of a deal. If anything it's just a personal annoyance. With All Might not liking it when the two of them travel over to electrical it's easiest to just stand still, or to look for something that gives off enough light to keep working until things get fixed.

Occasionally there are things that Midoriya thinks that he hears in the darkness.

Despite being sure that it can't be anything, All Might barely looks up from his work when he hears it after all, sometimes Midoriya can't help but call into the darkness whenever he hears something rummaging around.

Maybe Polus has rats.

The lights slowly hum back to life, not bright enough to burn their eyes as they come back on up and down the room. He makes another little note in his notebook, this time in the back. He likes to know how long each of the blackouts are.

"How long?"

"Under two minutes."

"Kayama must have gotten to it first."

He could almost laugh. Despite the absolute trainwreck that occurs whenever the group of crew ends up at electric, Kayama is one of the only people who knows what she's doing there.

"Sample's ready," All Might tells him as the machine slows down and unlocks.

"Did you want to be the one to look at them?"

Of course he does.

What would Midoriya be doing on Polus if he didn't want to do everything there is to do there? He's on another planet, he wants to know everything there is to it.

Four of the five samples come back normal, and the last one comes back red. Although he's asked more than once about what the machine actually does and why it matters that they take samples - he hasn't gotten a straight answer yet. The only thing he has at the moment are instructions, which is pressing a button and waiting for Yagi to finish jotting something down on his own clipboard.

Despite the suits, All Might's writing is a lot neater.

"What's next?"

All Might looks back down at his little clipboard again. Midoriya's pretty sure that it's a regular sized one, actually, but everything looks so small in the man's hands.

"Aizawa switched around some of the roles around this week, must be his idea of mixing things up... Looks like we're off to specimen."

Midoriya makes a face. He can't help it, the walk down to specimen is long, and even though it's easy to see the lava through the slated windows, really the only place it can be seen clearly while being inside, it's not very interesting.

Being on Polus isn't supposed to be interesting.

"Relax, it's just data upload."

"That takes the longest."

All Might looks a bit lost at what to tell him then, just kind of giving him a look.

"Right, right... still has to get done."

Even just getting there means walking through decontamination, something that happens both ways through the door. Midoriya's never asked why before, but as he's sprayed down with a sanitation mist, he asks All Might.

"This was something else that had to get fixed by the last electrician."

They don't talk about the electrician this directly.

"Yeah?" Midoriya asks, prompting him a little.

"Mm, it's only supposed to spray on the way out, because that's where the laboratory used to be before it was moved up to where it is now. It was something else he was supposed to fix when it just became more or less a storage space."

There's a moment of pause before Midoriya bites the bullet and asks the question on his mind before All Might shuts the conversation down.

"Who was he? Like, his name."

All Might pauses for a moment when the door finally opens and leads into a dark hallway. Taking out his own flashlight, Midoriya fumbling to do the same, they walk down together. Midoriya has a feeling he knows who hasn't been fixing the lights.

"His name was Mirai Sasaki."

Most of the time it's difficult to pull things out of him, to get him to talk about things that aren't the present. It isn't his job to talk about his feelings, just to research.

He and Midoriya don't really confide in each other.

Who knew that going down to specimen was going to give the two of them an opportunity?

"Did you know him well? Like, were you guys friends?"

"You could say that."

As they make their way down to specimen, Midoriya waits for him to say something else, if there's going to be something else. He doesn't know what to expect now as they swiftly approach the end of the hall.

"I don't think that he would have liked you being my successor... Then again, I don't think he would have liked me very much at my beginning either. But yeah... we were close."

The lights in the Specimen room are dim compared to the lava outside the window, but it's enough for All Might to turn off his flashlight when they flicker on and Midoriya does the same as the upload starts. With the slowest upload on base started, All Might turns back towards Midoriya, seemingly unsure of what to say next.

"So... where is he?"

There's really only one place he can be, but -

"He died."

Midoriya had been hoping for a different answer.

People don't exactly get to leave Polus. It isn't just a job, it's an entirely new home. Getting back to Earth is easier said than done.

"Oh... I'm, uh, sorry."

"You didn't kill him, my boy, you don't need to apologize."

Death isn't something that Midoriya likes to talk about. Something that he's well versed in but not comfortable with. He begins to fidget with the corner of his notebook, letting the pages clumsily slip against the material of the gloves.

"What was he like, back when he was alive?"

"He was smart... and practical. He and Aizawa got on well."

There's something that Midoriya can't imagine. Aizawa doesn't seem like the kind of person to have any friends. For the most part, he seems like someone who gets surrounded by other people who won't leave him alone.

"Really?"

All Might nods a little.

"I don't think he ever talks about it. He's always been a bit... sensitive."

There's a thought that makes him want to laugh in the uncomfortable air of the somberness. Maybe it was better when the depth of their conversation was more puddle-like.

"Aizawa's sensitive?"

He doesn't mean to sound disbelieving.

"Hm? Oh, absolutely. He's just been through his own losses. I don't think Sasaki dying did him any favors."

Right. Sometimes it takes Midoriya time to remember that there was a time before him. People that he doesn't know, people that have already come and gone from here.

People die.

He's heard rumors that on Polus that they just dump bodies into the lava when they die. Either for convenience or for some scientific purpose, Midoriya wonders if Sasaki is down there in the hot glow out there. He wonders if the other people that Aizawa has lost are down there too.

There's a beeping sound that comes from the screen, interrupting Midoriya's thoughts and the somber silence.

"Upload is done," All Might says lightly, pushing a few buttons on the screen.

It doesn't feel like it took forever that time.

Time is really more of an abstract concept for Midoriya here. Apparently time works differently, not that his body would be willing to commit to a regular Earth schedule now. It's a much smaller planet that moves much faster than his home world and yet it never seems to see the sun.

They make their way, flashlights on, through the other exit from specimen to the office. All Might says that he just wants to check some things, and who is Midoriya to refuse him?

"You know, you've done well keeping up with me."

"Hm?"

"Being my apprentice! Assistant?" All Might pauses for a moment in the hallway, thinking to himself and Midoriya almost walking into him. "I don't know the word I'm looking for. Either way, you're good at it."

"I am?"

"Of course! Most adults can't keep up with me, but you, even as a high schooler, can keep up with me and the work."

"I, uh- I thank you."

Midoriya cringes at the awkward wording, but he can't force himself to find another way to word it. The praise isn't constant, and it means something to him when All Might gives it.

Praise from All Might is like praise from his childhood hero.

Who is he kidding, All Might is his childhood hero.

"Thank you for being here with me."

When they make it through the other side of decontamination (something Sasaki didn't get the chance to fix Midoriya figures) into the surprisingly dull office area that kind of reminds him of the waiting room at the old hospital his mom used to take him to, shelves of probably outdated books on the shelves included, All Might doesn't say anything more.

The moment is over, it's back to work for now.

"Do you know how to use vitals, young Midoriya?"

"Hm, uh... I've seen you do it," he offers.

All Might nods at the screen when they make it to it.

"Give it a go, tell me what you see."

Midoriya does what he's told, regardless of the nerves he feels being watched so closely by his childhood idol. There are eight spots on the screen. Midoriya doesn't really have one.

Black, and orange, and yellow, and purple. Dark blue like All Might, light green for Power Loader, something that Midoriya doesn't really think fits him but never asks why it's the color that he took. Maybe he got to pick last.

"Do you see those two spots at the end?"

"The blank spots?" Midoriya asks.

There have always been two blank spots, as long as he's been here.

"Those are the ones on Polus who have died."

Just the thought of that leaves a knot in Midoriya's stomach.

The colors of their suits don't show up. There's nothing on there to suggest anything other than the fact that the suits aren't connected anymore.

There are eight official people on Polus. Nine including himself. Ten including Aizawa's young assistant.

That's almost the base working with a full deck of cards, but it doesn't make him feel better. Only made marginally better when All Might puts a hand on his shoulder.

"Maybe next time I'll just show you how to use vitals properly. I think you're about done for the day, aren't you?"

"Uh..."

"Take the rest of the day off," All Might tells him lightly. "You've done well, and you've even learned how to do something else on base. Pretty good job, kid."

All Might leaves Midoriya sitting there in front of the screen.

When he looks back, there are only seven people alive on vitals.



THE WRETCHED REALITY OF WINNING THE GAME

By kirikags

CW/TW: heavy angst, semi-open ending, mentions of murder of a minor character.

The ship is a quiet place.

It's a strange mix of unnerving and peaceful, the buzzing of the reactor and the shifting of the engines. Footsteps scurrying by, always in pairs of two because everybody knows what happens when you go off on your own.

It used to be loud. Laughter and chatter and even sometimes singing as everyone made their way through their daily tasks.

Bakugou is scared.

He's scared, but he's calm. He doesn't know how to process the situation they've found themselves in. Trapped, in the middle of space, light years away from the nearest habitable planet, and falling one by one as the days go by.

He's numb, but wired. Stuck in some sort of emotional limbo.

The only light he has left is Kirishima. Kirishima, his best friend, who still laughs and sings and *smiles* like maybe they aren't guaranteed a horrible end to this nightmare. Like one of their own friends isn't betraying all of them right underneath their noses.

The sound of the alarm is an unfortunately familiar sound. The limbo slamming back into him as the dread of finding out which one of their friends is lost and the relief that he survived another day mix in his conscience.

Bakugou's hands freeze on the wires he's trying to untangle. He doesn't realize he's shaking until Kirishima's hand lands on his shoulder. An anchor. A reminder.

They walk down the hallway together, footsteps echoing loudly, bouncing off the walls and rattling his skull. He can't feel his feet hitting the floor, but by god he hears them. The steady *thunk, thunk, thunk* the only reminder that any of this is real.

"Hey." The same familiar hand catches his shoulder just before he pushes open the doors to their meeting space. He doesn't turn around, but he can feel the smallest bit of tension melt away.

"We're gonna be late," he grunts out, but takes his hand away from the door handle.

"Yeah, I know. It's just," Kirishima pauses, the hand at his shoulder squeezing gently. "It's gonna be okay. We're gonna be okay."

It's a lie. A bold faced lie that he can't even pretend to believe, but he wants to. He wants to believe it. But he's learned the hard way to not let himself hope.

"Yeah." He opens the door.

The table is tense. Three occupants, sitting as far away from each other as they can manage. Sero is sitting there, stone cold sober but betrayed by the tears building up in his eyes. Mina, shoulders shaking, head buried in her hands. Deku, calm and collected as ever, but unmistakable sadness behind his eyes.

Kaminari is missing.

Bakugou has never considered anyone a friend. Before boarding this ship with eight strangers and his childhood pest, he's never looked at another person and felt fondness. Before these idiots, he never knew he could feel loss this much.

Fuck, Sparky was a pain in his ass on the best of days, but the kid knew how to get a smile out of anyone, could fill any room with laughter. He was a friend, and a damn good one.

Bakugou feels his chest burn.

Ashido breaks the silence, a heart wrenching "He's *gone!*" forcing its way through her. "I found his— he was—"

For the first time that night, Kirishima leaves his side and rounds the table to pull her into a hug. She sobs into his neck, ugly, heartbreaking heaves.

Ashido used to be their resident sunshine. She was strong and hard headed and always knew how to turn a bad situation into a bearable one. Seeing her sound as hopeless as the rest of them feel is a different kind of pain he's never felt before.

It's not fair. None of this is fair. Nobody on this ship deserves the torment they're being put through.

"The security tapes," Sero whispers. "She found him outside the armory, so the tapes should have picked it up."

Like everything else seems to be, it's a long shot. The tapes never play back when there's evidence on them. Whoever is playing this twisted game with them knows what they're doing, and they haven't slipped up yet. But it's worth a try.

The tapes don't play back.

Kirishima tries for hours, adjusting every frequency, searching every file, but the tapes are gone. The ones they do manage to find are corrupted beyond recognition, just the sickening sound of static and millions of black and grey pixels mocking them from the screen.

For the first time, they can't seem to reach an agreement. Sero wants to vote, Ashido is too distraught to make a decision, Midoriya says they don't have enough evidence. They can't make a decision, and the clock is creeping up on them. They have twenty minutes to get back in their pods for the night before everything shuts down.

So they cast their votes without reaching a consensus.

It's not what he expected.

One vote skip, one vote Bakugou, one vote Ashido two votes... Kirishima.

All hell breaks loose.

"*Who was it? Who the fuck was it? Speak up, you fucking cowards!*" He jumps to his feet, fists slamming down on the table. Papers fly everywhere, something breaks, but all Bakugou can see is red. Angry, burning red that anyone would even dare to try to take away the only source of positivity left in this hell on earth.

Of course, nobody speaks up. You're forbidden from revealing your votes for the safety of everyone involved. Nobody's gonna talk, but Bakugou is going to get his answers. A blind panic fills his body, a screaming desperation to hold on to just one thing. To protect the one person who he can trust in a room full of imposters.

"It's gotta be the two imposters," he spits. "*This* is why we don't vote without evidence! Now you bunch of morons— Don't you dare walk out of this room, Ei. We're gonna settle this right fucking now."

"Sit down, Kacchan," Midoriya doesn't snap, but he comes close. The only fucker here to manage to keep his composure in the worst of times.

"Or fucking what? You gonna kill me too, you shitty nerd? *Hah?*"

"Will you st—"

"*Bakugou!* Sit. Down. Now's a little late to be throwing around accusations, don't you think?" Sero does snap at him. His hands are fisted on top of the table, knuckles white and face pinched. Ashido is barely getting air into her poor lungs with how hard she's sobbing.

Kirishima looks calm. He looks calm but Bakugou can see the panic in his eyes. Can see the sadness and the betrayal behind them. Can hear the soft *I don't want to die here* whispered to him in the safety of the nighttime where nobody else can hear them.

Like hell he's gonna let that happen. Screw the voting, screw the procedures. There's no possible way Kirishima could have killed Kaminari and he will spend his last dying breath making sure everybody damn well knows that.

So he yells. He fights, and he argues with anyone who will listen but in the end it's Kirishima's hand on his shoulder again. It's his voice telling him that it's over. There's nothing they can do.

Bakugou crushes him into a hug, pulling him in with enough force to crack a rib on a weaker man. Kirishima's arms are strong around his shoulders, but Bakugou is trembling, trying his hardest to both stall for time and keep himself together. He can't go, he *can't*, "We can find another way—"

But Kirishima pulls away. His eyes are sad but they're still so bright, and Bakugou has to look away before the tears building up behind his own betray him.

"What's done is done, Bakubro. You know that," he whispers. Bakugou wants to punch him in the face.

Kirishima walks over to the airlock with steady steps. The same echo that once brought him some small sliver of comfort making his stomach drop lower to the floor with each step.

He doesn't know who is holding him back, who's arms are holding him up when his knees give out, but he doesn't register any of that.

All he knows is that right before the airlock opens, Kirishima turns around. His eyes are too dark, almost black and still filled with sorrow. His smile is sharp, his teeth look like weapons. The shadows around him move as if they have their own free will, twisting and turning like sentient limbs.

All the air in Bakugou's lungs leave at once. He thinks there might be a hole in them, because no matter how hard he sucks in, he can't seem to get it back.

"*Holy shit,*" someone gasps behind him.

"No..." He breathes, "*No!* It can't— you're not..." The arms holding him lose their grip and he falls to his knees on the floor. He wants to run, but he's paralyzed by fear, stunned by the disbelief and hurt and the *humiliation* of being deceived by the person he trusted most. The only person he would have trusted his life with.

Kirishima is smiling. Horrifying and cruel but so unmistakably him that Bakugou can't wrap his mind around what exactly is standing in front of them. Can't believe that mouth is the same one that yelled words of encouragement at them, sang songs of praise and laughed and smiled so brightly that sometimes everything felt okay.

"I'm kinda glad you got me!" He laughs, a pathetic chuckle leaving his lips. "I didn't want to hurt anyone anymore."

His black eyes soften. His smile dims. Despite what's so obviously laid out in front of them, Bakugou knows that Kirishima isn't evil. He doesn't know why this happened to them, or what the purpose was, but Bakugou knows his best friend is not a monster.

He hopes the person he grew to know this past year is the same one standing in front of him.

Everybody is rendered silent. Nobody screams the questions they desperately want answers to. *Why? Weren't we friends? Didn't you care like we did?*

He doesn't even think any of them would want to hear the answers.

Kirishima turns one more time, locking eyes with Bakugou for the last time.

"You're gonna be okay, Kat."

But Bakugou knows he won't be. Even if they managed to rid themselves of all the traitors, Bakugou knows that his life will never be the same. He's learned just as much as he's lost, he's felt companionship just to have it torn out from under him. The stench of blood and the blaring of the alarm will be forever ingrained in his mind.

He'll go back home. He'll continue the life he left behind but Bakugou knows that the piece of himself lost to this ship will never come back. He'll hear a car drive by with its music too loud and he'll remember Jirou. He'll see some high school kid running on the sidewalk and remember Iida, or sit through a thunderstorm and think of Sparky. He'll see something every day, something to remind him that the life he lived in the emptiness of space wasn't a bad dream, or a twisted joke.

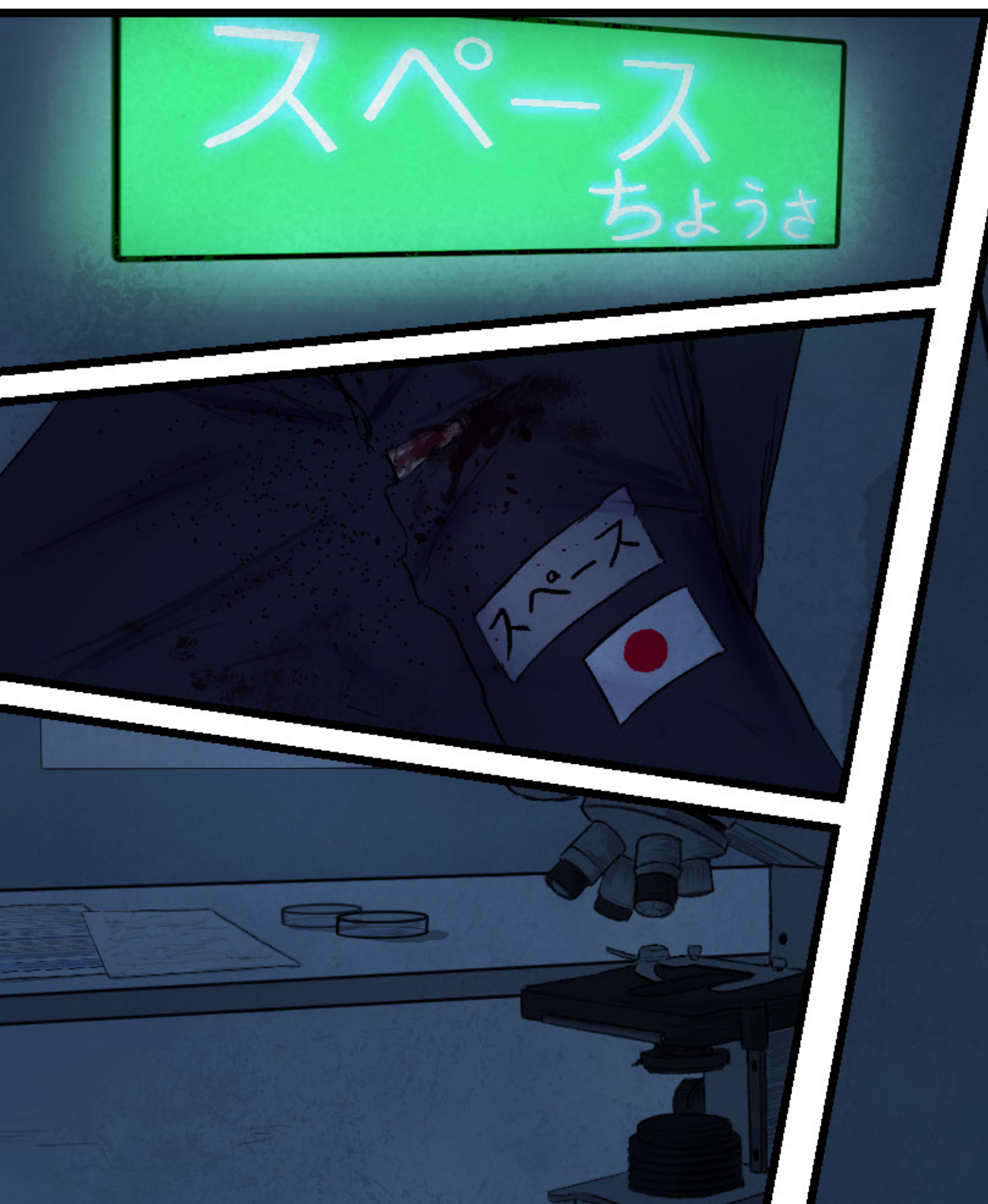
He'll see red and think of the only person he was ever truly afraid to lose.

As soon as the door closes behind Kirishima the lights flicker one last time and for the second time that night, Bakugou feels loss.

BEEP

BEEP

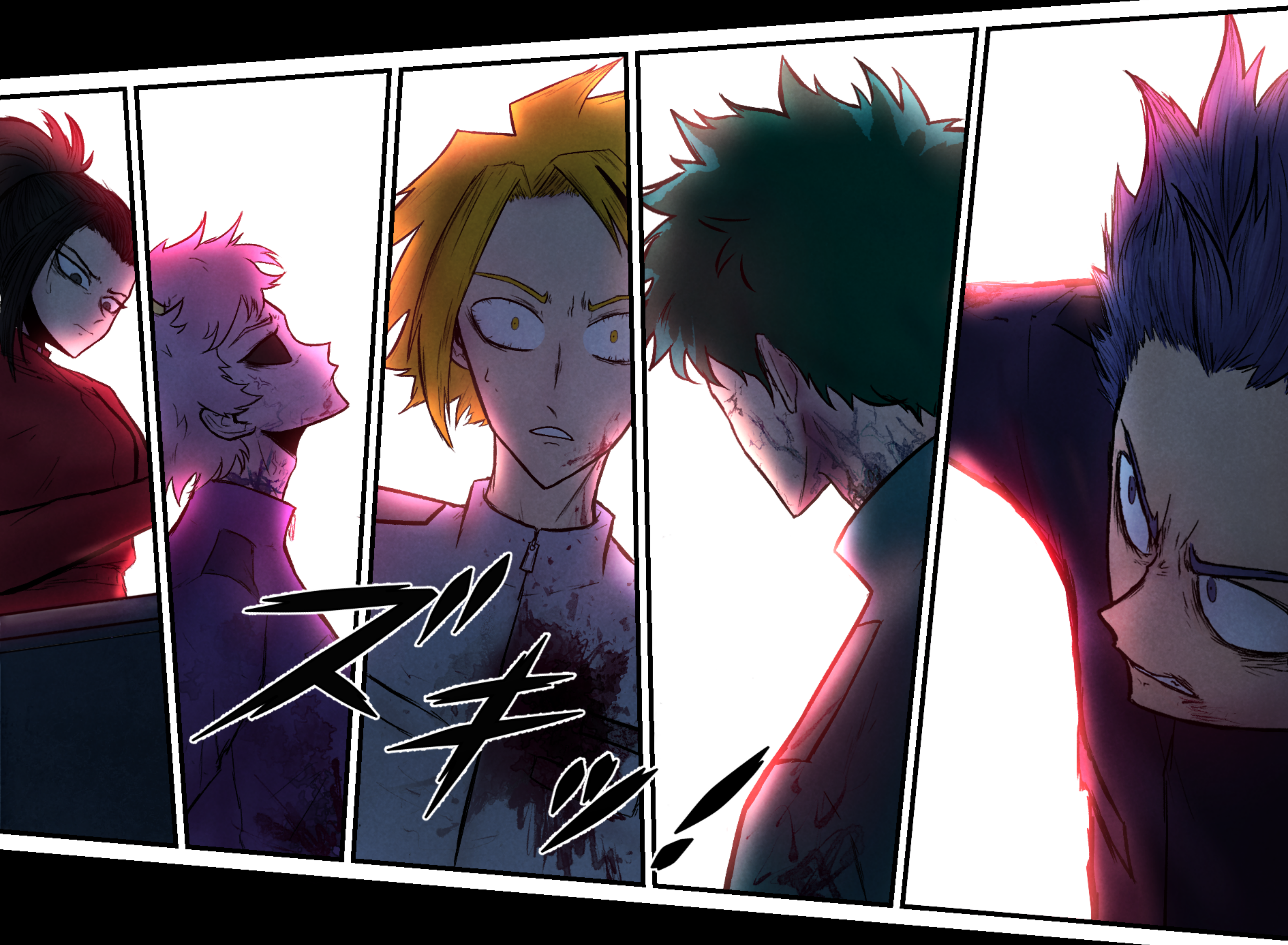
BEEP



ALL WE WERE SENT TO DO WAS TO
RECOVER SOME REVOLUTIONARY
SPECIMEN FOR FUTURE INVESTIGATION

YAUUYUROZU SUSPECTED SOMETHING
OFF ON OUR WAY BACK, BUT
BY THEN IT WAS TOO LATE

HOW COULD WE HAVE ANTICIPATED
THIS OUTCOME...



A PARASITE AWARE OF ITS PREY.
HIJACKING AND PILOTING THEM
TO HUNT AND SATISFY ITS HUNGER

EXPLOITING THEIR QUIRKS
TO THE POINT IT DESTROYS THEIR
BODIES

ONE SLAUGHTER AFTER ANOTHER
BETWEEN OURSELVES...



UNDER THE MASS OF SPACE

By ace

Looking out the windows of The Skeld, Shouto can't help but feel off. Small, even. He's been here for almost 120 hours, and he hasn't gotten used to it. There's just something about being in a tiny ship among the great, black mass of space that fucks with a person's mind.

With a sigh, Shouto carries on with his tasks. Huffing, he swipes the card once more, and waits till it turns green...it never does. Shouto groans. This particular task never fails to irritate him; no matter how many times he swipes the damn card, the light never stops blinking. When it does, eventually, turn green, it takes *hours*. Hours, he tells you.

Shouto wrinkles his nose when the light continues to blink a deep red as if taunting him. He tries again, not too fast but not too slow, eyes focus. Or, he could've if it weren't for the doors exploding open. Curses ringing in his ears, Shouto glances towards the door.

Of course, Shouto thinks as he spots a familiar red suit. The suit that belongs to one of the loudest people Shouto has the *pleasure* of meeting, and he had to deal with his *father* for half of his current lifespan. Bakugou pauses, scowling at him as if he was a piece of gum under his boot.

Like always, Shouto pays him no mind.

Ever since he arrived at The Skeld, the man has it out for Shouto. Always glaring daggers into his skull whenever they cross paths. Always scowling at him during crew meetings. Shouto has no idea what he did to him.

He also briefly wondered if it's just his natural face. That is still being debated on.

"The fuck are you doing here, Halfie!" Bakugou shouts

Shouto rolls his eyes, swiping the card again. Much to his relief, the light blinks green. *Finally*.

Bakugou screeches.

"That isn't very crewmate-y of you," he says, face as blank as ever. It's a phrase that flies around the ship, always being thrown at Bakugou. His reactions are rather *entertaining*.

Bakugou's eyes flare, marching over to Shouto and grabbing a fist full of his suit. "You wanna go, Halfie? Wanna die right here?"

His lips twitch into a blood-thirsty grin but for some odd reason, Shouto isn't afraid.

Instead, he meets the other's glare and says, "Even with the way you portray yourself, I know you don't have it in you to kill someone."

Shouto knocks his hand away before Bakugou can respond, and bumps their shoulders together as he passes by him. He doesn't need to turn around to know Bakugou is glaring daggers into his back.

Before it can escalate, however, they hear a small cry from outside of Admin. The two share a look; amongst Bakugou's scowl and rage-filled glare is a tense jaw and an uncertain look. They both understood their predicament. The noise can be anything from crewmates messing with them, at best, or...the *imposter*, at worse.

The door slides open and they enter the hallway. Shouto is the first to see them: Fuyumi, spread out on the floor, her once white suit caked with blood, pooling over the pristine floor. Next, he sees Eri whimpering next to her and shaking her body with shaky hands.

Shouto can't breathe. His heartbeat threatens to beat out of his chest, his vision begins to blur, and shaky breaths slip from his lips.

"-alfie! Fucking listen to me!" Bakugou's voice reaches his ears.

Shouto glances up at him, back laying against the cold wall; he didn't even notice he sat down. Bakugou's hand is raised but makes no move to touch him.

"You gotta take deep breaths," Bakugou exclaims, "you hear me!" Through his spotty vision, Shouto can see an unreadable expression cross his face, but almost calm.

Shouto shakes his head, red and white fringes shield his eyes. His heart thunders within his chest; pain flashes behind his close eyelids, ears ringing. Thoughts of Fuyumi, blood on the floor still filled his head, Eri's cries from down the hall ring in his ears.

He has to...

"But- what ab...out 'Yumi and Eri," Shouto breathes, barely hidden tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Fucking! Hey, look at me, okay," Bakugou commands, voice leveled. Sniffling, Shouto looks up at him, breathing heavily, and winces at the artificial lights clouding his vision.

Clicking his tongue, Bakugou moves closer, blocking the lights from view. He wasn't close enough to touch him, or edge near his space to the point of being unbearable. Shouto doesn't feel like being touched right now—or ever really, now it feels worse—or even having someone so close to his space; his chest and the back of his eyes hurt.

"Don't worry about them right now...worry about yourself. Breathe," he says, taking a couple of exaggerated breaths. "Come on, copy me."

Shouto nods, letting out a shaky breath, and another and another. Heart thundering within his chest, pain bursting, ears deafening. His mind is still on Fuyumi but for some odd reason, having Bakugou in front of him when his vision is blurry and his head is hurting. It's somehow calming.

After a while of shaky breaths and wheezes, Shouto calms down, just a bit. His mind is still in shambles and his heartbeat still speeds up, but it isn't as bad as before.

"You good?" Bakugou asks. His face is glaring at the wall beside his head.

Shouto nods, quiet. His face is hot, feels the tips of his ears burn.

Shouto never loses this much control, especially in front of someone who could potentially use this weakness against him. However, Bakugou could've just left him there...

He gets up on shaky legs and almost drops right then and there on the floor if it weren't for Bakugou grabbing a hold of his arm.

"Hey! Don't get up that fast dumbass!"

Shouto nods, distracted. His gaze stays directed at Fuyumi and Eri.

The halls are vacant except for them. He's surprised that no one has appeared at all yet. Shouto starts walking. He can still feel Bakugou's grip on his arm as he moves.

"Eri," Shouto says, voice hoarse and tired.

Her shoulders tense and then relax when she recognizes his voice.

"Sh-shouto!" Eri cries, cheeks red and puffy. She stood up and raced towards him, "Mama..."

"I know..." Shouto whispers, stopping himself from glancing at Fuyumi—Fuyumi's *body*, cold and lifeless. Instead, he kneels in front of Eri and pulls her into his chest, burying his face into her hair. God, even her hair smells like the shampoo Fuyumi was obsessed with.

Normally, he isn't this touchy, but Eri needs him right now... and maybe Shouto needs this too.

He doesn't notice when Bakugou reports Fuyumi's body until the alarm sounds throughout the ship.

Shouto knows what's coming and honestly, he doesn't want to deal with it right now.

The Cafeteria is loud when they arrive.

Eri is in his arms, face buried into his shoulder and arms wrapped tightly around his neck. She stopped crying through the walk, but Shouto can hear tiny sniffles from time to time.

Much to his surprise, Bakugou hasn't left their side. During the walk to the Cafeteria, he stayed close to them with his arms crossed and a classic scowl on his face.

Despite how Shouto felt about it before, it is oddly comforting now.

"Great, most of the gang's all here!" Sero, orange suit, exclaims with that huge grin of his.

In total, The Skeld's numbers reached up to about ten people. Now, *nine*.

"We're missing two more?" Yaoyorozu, purple suit, comments, tapping a finger against her chin.

"One is dead," Bakugou states from behind him.

The Cafeteria slips into a deafening silence, and a shiver runs down his spine. Eri's grip around his neck tightens, burying her face into his suit.

"Who...was it?" Uraraka, pink suit, asks, voice filled with concern as she approaches them.

"My sister," Shouto tells them before Bakugou could respond for him. A hush silence claims forth and sucks all the air, becoming thick and stilted.

"Todoroki-kun," Midoriya, green suit, whispers.

The atmosphere shatters with a sudden slam ricocheting through the room. Eri flinches in his arms.

Eyes snap towards the Cafeteria's open doors where Kaminari, yellow suit, appears before them, hands gripping the doors jambs, panting and cheeks red. "Alright, who's dead!"

"Kaminari!" A wave of offended voices washes over them like a tidal wave. Besides Toga's (cyan suit) giggles and Shigaraki's (black suit) annoyed huffs. Of course. From the little Shouto knows of them, the two had always been... weird to say the least. Well, Toga really...Shouto has *talked* to her, technically.

"What! I'm just asking!" Kaminari whines, voice muffled by his mask.

"Well, don't fucking say anything then!" Bakugou screeches from where he stands, hands form into fists at his sides.

Kaminari squawks, "Not cool man!"

"Okay," Yaoyorozu interrupts. With a hand on her hip, she narrows her eyes at Bakugou and Kaminari, "now that everyone is here...most of us. We can start."

The voting ended in a two way tie between Shigaraki and Toga. Kaminari was a close second, being the usual suspect for some odd reason—maybe due to the abysmal luck that seems to follow him.

Shouto didn't vote.

Eri has a hard time falling asleep. It wasn't a new thing, and Fuyumi was the only one who could get her to fall asleep.

"It's my fault...isn't it?" Eri whispers into the quiet bubble forming between them. Blinking in surprise, Shouto kneels next to her bed.

"Why do you say that?"

"...I wanted to help with the tasks...and," she stops, gripping the blanket with her small, gloved hands, "I ran off...it wasn't on purpose though!"

Her red eyes glance at him and then at the nearby wall. The rest of the crewmates are still completing tasks around the ship, so the room is silent, almost deafening.

"And that's when I heard a small thump," she continues, teary eyed. "I was scared but I still ran...that's when I saw..."

There's a small snuffle, and a hand is pressed against her mouth. Despite how expressive she can be, Eri has a hard time allowing herself to express any emotion. The little bursts of smiles or giggles are one in a million, so tears hit a hundred times worse.

Fuyumi would sing her to sleep whenever tears would fill her vision, hands running through white hair until she fell asleep. Biting his bottom lip, Shouto's vision shifts, and a heavy weight fills his chest.

"It's not your fault, Eri," Shouto whispers, patting her head.

Goddamn it, he sighs, closing his eyes. Patting someone's head is completely different from running your hand through their hair.

"It's okay," Eri tells him, "can you sing something?"

Shouto blinks at her, mind blank. Much like himself, Eri never asks for anything. Even if he's not a singer, he wants to do it anyway. Shouto knows firsthand how...selfish you feel when asking for something, even if it's something small. The feeling festers inside of you, and you feel like a bother.

Shouto has seen the way her...father treated her, how he treated Fuyumi. He doesn't want her to feel that way *again*.

"I'll try," Shouto says with a miniscule smile, and begins to croak out a song his mother would sing to him when he was young. His voice is soft, and scratchy. However, Eri falls asleep regardless. Her tiny hand holding his fingers and lips formed into a small smile.

There's a grunt coming from behind him. Narrowing his eyes, Shouto turns to see Bakugou leaning against the doorway. He's looking at Eri with an unreadable expression on his face, arms crossed and red eyes shining. As if noticing his staring, he glances at him.

"I'm going to find out who the bastard is," he declares, voice unusually quiet. As if the bastard in question is here, hiding in the shadows.

His statement sounds like a promise.

Shouto just stares at him, jaw clenching, and eyes glassy.

"I don't want your pity," is what he says. It sounds off, even to his ears.

"I ain't doing this for you," he responds, hands buried in his pockets. The storm constantly brewing in his eyes is calmer but no less fierce, "As if I'm letting whoever that bastard thinks he is win whatever sick game they're playing! I wanna find out who the bastard is."

Shouto blinks at him. As much as he wants to stop them...he looks back at Eri. She's smiling softly against the mattress, her fingers don't lose their grip.

He's not sure if he wants to know who it is, or not.

It's been a week since Fuyumi's death. Despite the constant chatter, The Skeld isn't as lively as it once was. Or, at least it was to Shouto.

Case in point, the Cafeteria is loud as always. Kaminari and Sero are talking about racing each other through the halls, even if they should complete their tasks. Uraraka, Yaoyorozu, and Midoriya are talking about something a couple of ways away.

Shouto supposes the atmosphere is lively, but he still feels this small sad bubble surrounding him. The Fuyumi-shape hole next to him is cold and empty as it has been for the last couple of days.

Eri is sitting on his lap, kicking her legs, and watching the others with a soft look in her eyes.

Then, someone sits next to them. Shouto narrows his eyes, and turns to see Bakugou sitting next to him. He doesn't say a word for a while. Until-

"What the fuck are you looking at, Halfie!" he grunts, narrowing his eyes at him. It almost gave Shouto a whiplash with how different Bakugou seemed compared to the man that helped him through a panic attack. The one who said he would find the imposter with that look in his eyes that Shouto still couldn't place. *However...* Shouto glances at the bags under the other's eyes. The way he would glance around, and overall...how tired he looks.

Shouto doesn't say anything though. If he did, Bakugou would yell at him. So, they stay in a bubble of silence.

The seat next to him doesn't feel as empty anymore.

"We found the imposter," Bakugou tells him.

Shouto knows those words should've caused *something* to burst inside him. Anger scorching within his veins. Relief that he can finally bestow justice against the murder. But, Shouto feels nothing. He simply wants to lay on his bed and sleep for a year.

Eri is looking up at him, simply watching him with those red eyes of hers. He briefly notes the similarities, and differences, between her eyes and Bakugou's. Her eyes always seem far too serious to belong to a child's. As if she saw far too much than any adult twice her age. *Just like him.*

Shouto looks back at Bakugou, and nods.

(Eri stayed in the room. Midoriya and Uraraka offered to take care of her.)

It was Shigaraki. Shouto can't say he's surprised. It still hurts to see the huge grin on his face when he talks about her murder as if it was nothing.

Bakugou punched him in the face.

Shouto and Eri stared out the window. Bakugou is behind them, leaning against the wall. A surprisingly comforting presence.

They watch the stars twinkle in the everlasting darkness, but unlike before, it doesn't feel as off.

Under the mass of space, Shouto feels...okay. Or, will be okay. Especially with Eri (and Bakugou) by his side.

MERCH ARTISTS

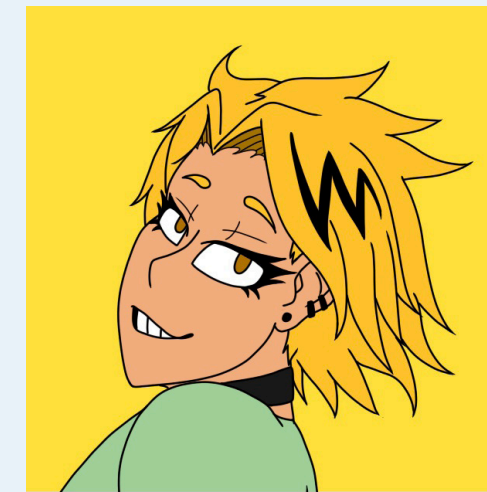


ALEXPDCI

PHONE WALLPAPER

🐦 alex_pdcl_art
t alexpdcl

@ alex_pdcl_art

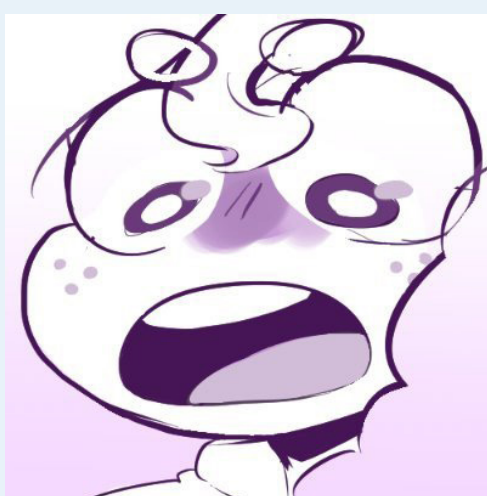


DEERYBRI

ICONS

🐦 DeeryBri

@ deery.arts

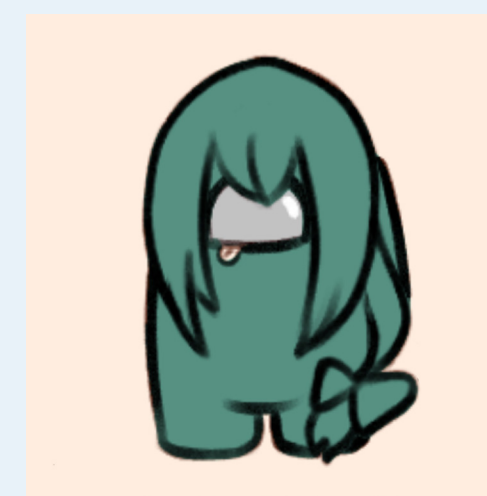


LILLASTARRR

ICONS

🐦 lillastarr
t lillastarr

@ lillastarr

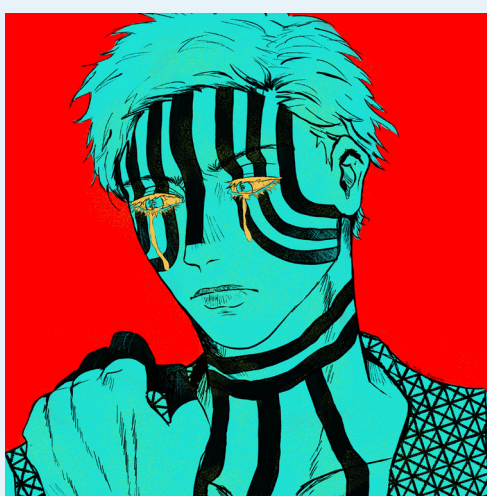


S_HOLDTHEBUS

TWITTER HEADER

🐦 s_holdthebus
t sholdthebus

@ s_holdthebus



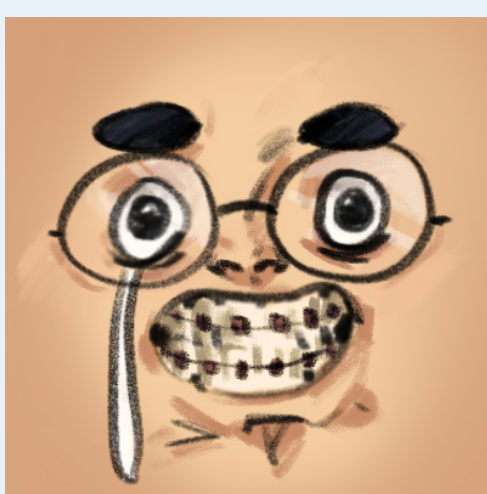
TIIDA

DESKTOP WALLPAPER

🐦 tiidatoma

@ tiidatoma

COVER ARTIST



ACE

🐦 AcceCakes
t accecakes

@ accecakes

MODERATORS



BRASH WRITING MOD & BETA READER

🐦 ____REDRIOT____



CAIA ART MOD

🐦 izucaii

🌐 izucaii.carrd.co



FEONIXE FORMATTING MOD

🐦 svec_design

📷 svec.design

🌐 svecdesign.carrd.co



KEI WRITING MOD & BETA READER

🐦 kamunamis

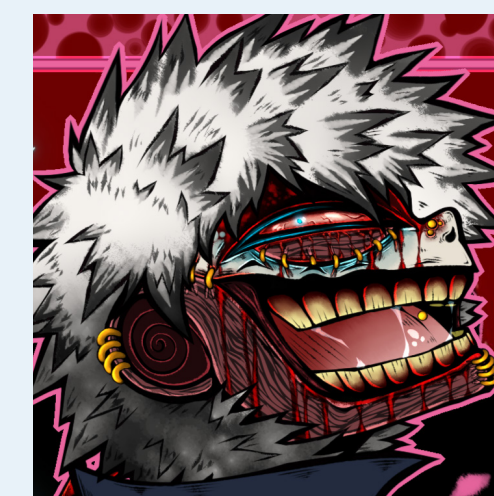
📷 kamunamis



LO SOCIAL MEDIA & COMS. MOD

🐦 armadil_Lo

📷 armadil_Lo



NESTYGUTS ART MOD

🐦 nestyguts

📷 nestyguts



SAI GRAPHICS MOD

🐦 gumrude

📷 gumrude

COPYRIGHT DISCLAIMER

Published digitally as a free-to-view fanzine, Imposter Syndrome: An Among Us BNHA Zine is not intended for resale or redistribution. Rights for the art and written works in this document belong to their respective creators.

The pieces featured in this fanzine are works of fiction inspired by Boku No Hero Academia and Among Us. We do not claim ownership over either of these media. All rights belong to Kohei Horikoshi for Boku No Hero Academia, and InnerSloth for Among Us.